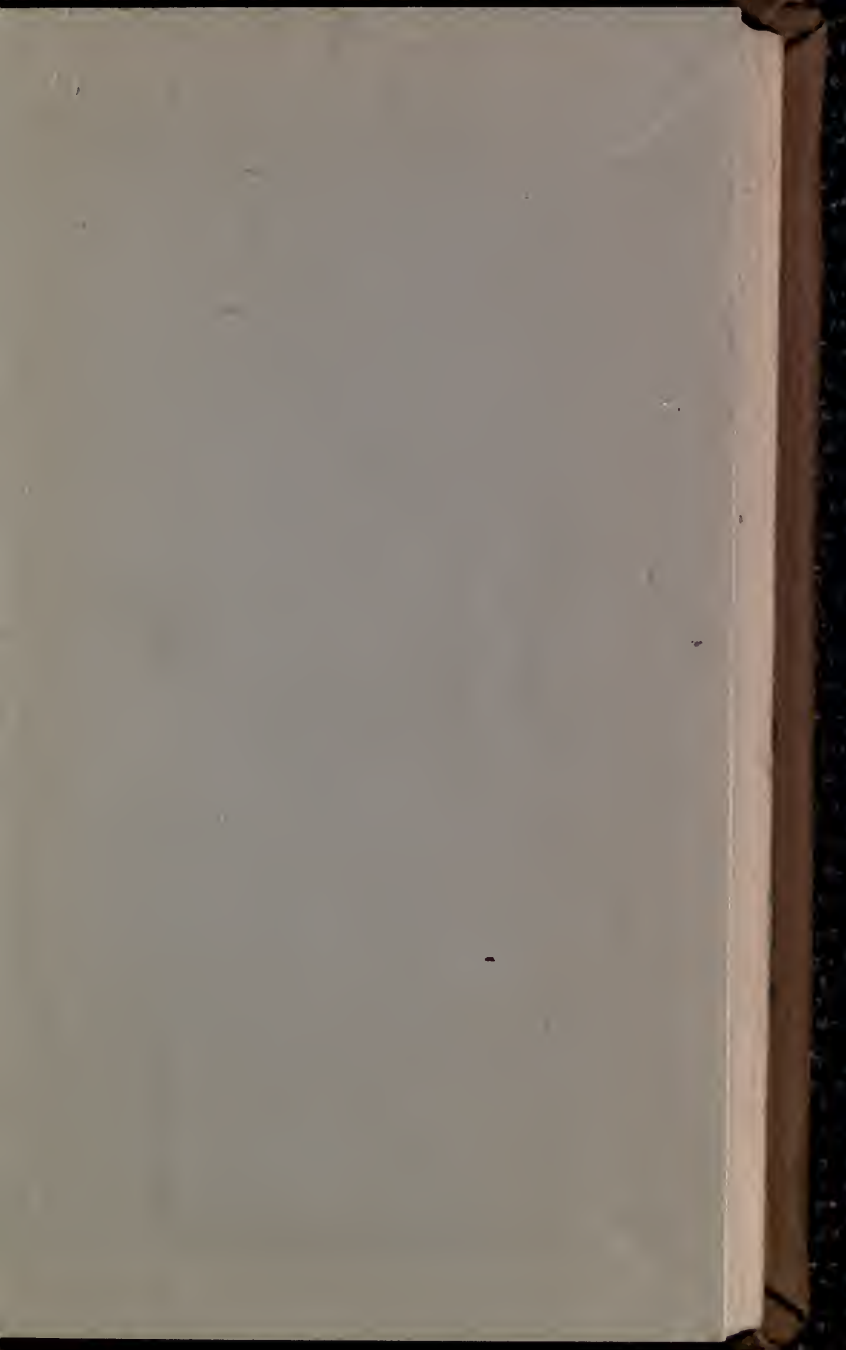
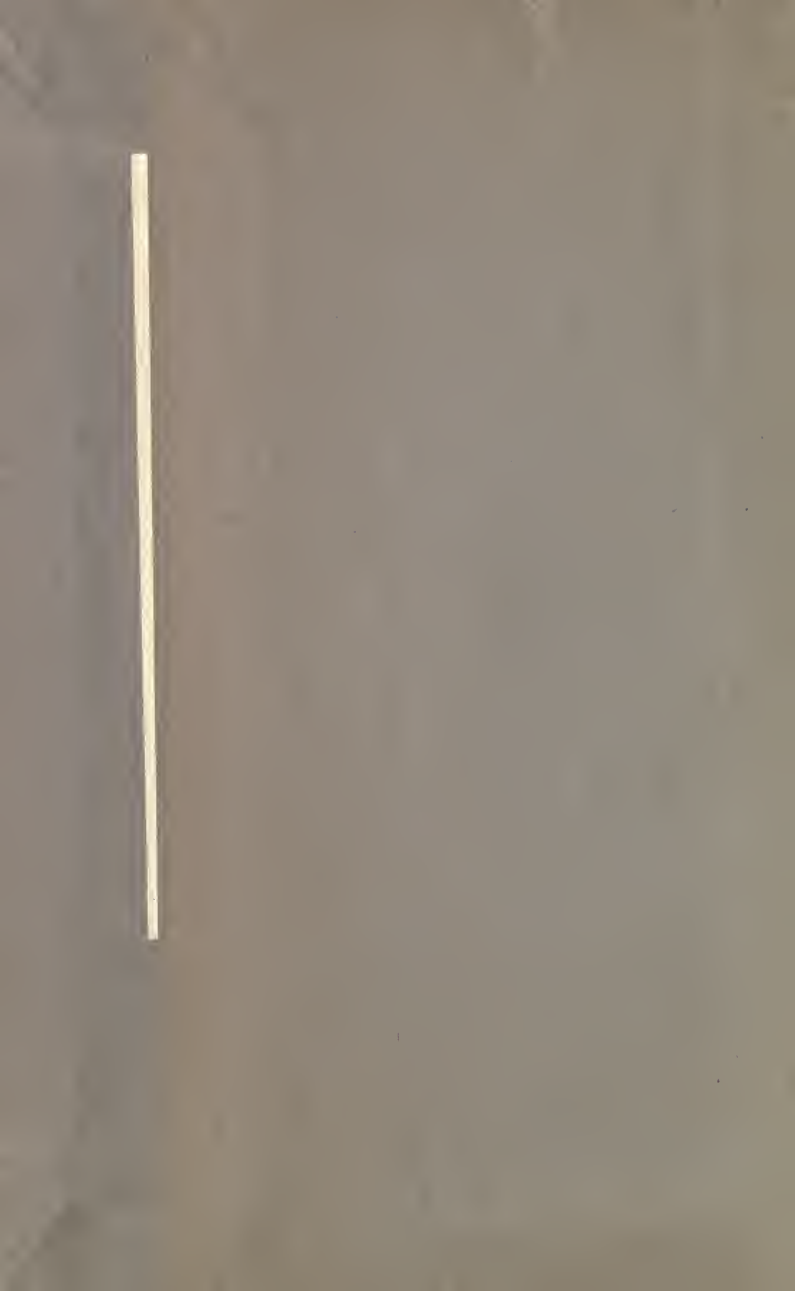


nia



THE L
C
THE UN
OF CAL
LOS AN







3474

13



THE FATHER AND SON'S SURPRISE.

R E N A ;

OR,

T H E S N O W B I R D .

A Tale of Real Life.

BY MRS. CAROLINE LEE HENTZ.

AUTHOR OF "LINDA," "COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE," "THE PLANTER'S
NORTHERN BRIDE," "EOLINE," "MARCUS WARLAND," ETC.

"I pray thee let me weep to-night
'Tis rarely I am weeping;
My tears are buried in my heart,
Like cave-locked fountains sleeping.
I cannot bear to think of this;
Oh! leave me to my weeping;
A few tears for that grave, my heart,
Where hope in Death is sleeping."—L. E. L.

Philadelphia:

T B. PETERSON AND BROTHERS,
306 CHESTNUT STREET.

Entered, according to the Act of Congress, in the year 1851, by

A. HART,

in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States, in and for
the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

MEARS, STEREOTYPER.

COLLINS, PRINTER

AMERICAN TYPE SETTING COMPANY

25 NASSAU ST. N.Y.

PS -
1919
Har

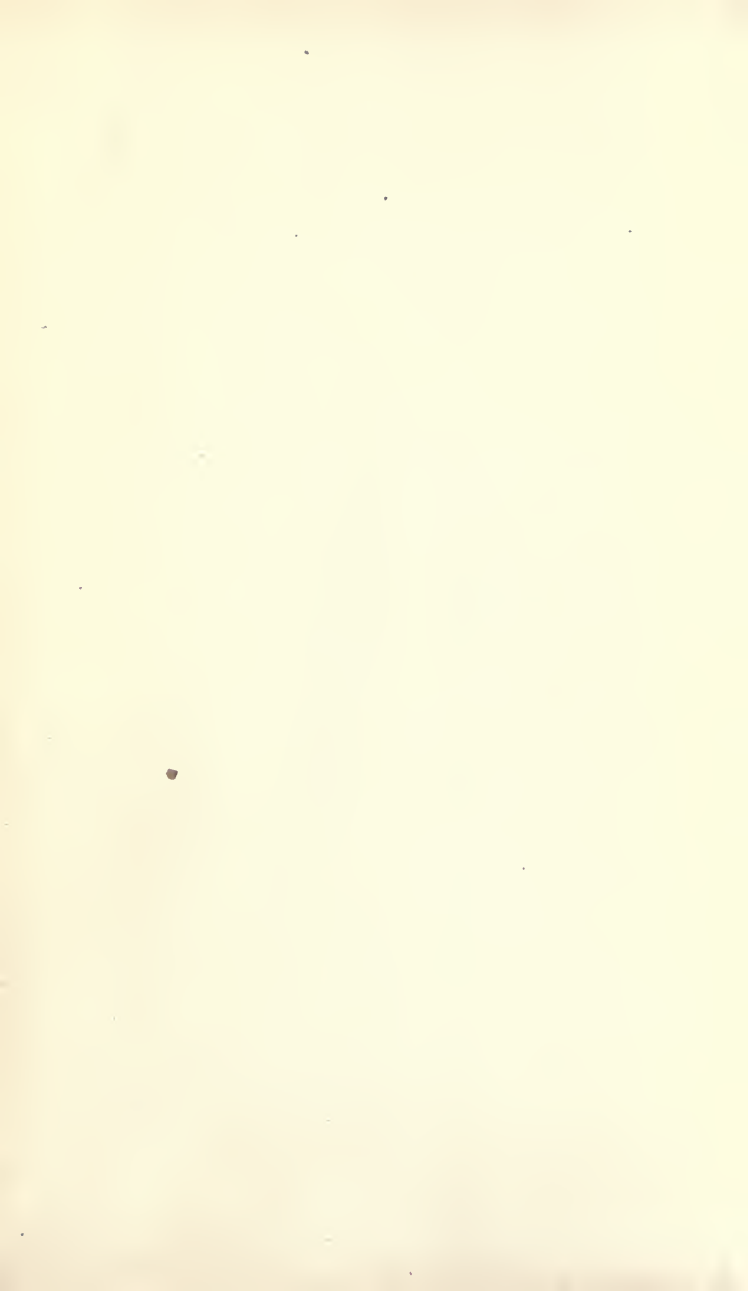
TO
GENERAL HENRY WHITING,
OF NEW YORK,
THIS WORK IS DEDICATED,
AS A TOKEN OF
SISTERLY AFFECTION,
BY THE
AUTHOR.

449794

LIBRARY SETS

MAY 25 '42

ALPINE BOOK CO.



INTRODUCTION.

TO THE READER.

¹
² IN presenting the following pages to the public, in the hope that they will secure a genial welcome, I cannot refrain from expressing my gratitude for the kind reception given to the former children of my imagination. If "RENA" be greeted as cordially, and judged as leniently, as "AUNT PATTY" and "LINDA," I shall be encouraged to continue; and, in my next production, will again transfer the scenes from the snow-clad regions of the North to the land of the sunny South.

CAROLINE LEF FENTZ.

COLUMBUS, Georgia.

REN A;

OR,

THE SNOWBIRD.

CHAPTER I.

“ Oh ! how canst thou renounce the boundless store
Of charms, which nature to its votary yields ?
The warbling woodlark—the resounding shore—
The pomp of groves—the garniture of fields,—
All that the genial ray of morning gilds,
And all that echoes to the song of even—
All that the mountain’s sheltering bosom shields,
And all the dread magnificence of Heaven,
Oh ! how canst thou renounce, and hope to be forgiven ?”

BEATTIE.

“ You don’t love me, mama,” said a weary-looking child, who was sitting on a low chair, right in the corner of the room, to a pale, sickly lady, who was at a table by the open window, sewing. The soft summer air was blowing softly, very softly upon the delicate cheek of the invalid, tempering the heat of a sultry August day. It was much pleasanter sitting there, breathing the only air circulating in the room, than

in that little hot corner, where the child was ensconced, between two black-bottomed, mahogany-backed chairs.

"You don't love me, mama," repeated the child, in the desperation of her weariness, stretching her arms and feet as far as they could possibly extend,—“or you wouldn't make me sit here so long. I'm so tired! I ache all over! Please let me go.”

"You are so noisy, Rena—so disobedient. I told you half a dozen times to be quiet, and not romp about so in the yard. I have no other way to keep you still, but by confining you in the house. It does no good to speak to you. It is your own fault.”

"I don't mean to be disobedient, mama—I forget. I can't think to remember, I'm so happy out of doors. I cannot help singing and laughing. I won't do so any more.”

"Then you get so brown in the sun. You never *will* wear a bonnet. You make a complete fright of yourself.”

"The little calves have brown skins, mama: and they are pretty.”

"Do hear the child talk!" said the mother. She could not help smiling. Rena caught the reflection of the smile on her heart. It was the herald of release from captivity. She could not wait for the permission for which she had been pleading, but, springing up, she caught her mother round the neck, and gave her one, two, three, half a dozen kisses, without stopping to take breath.

As we said before, it was a very warm day, and she had been sitting an hour in a very warm, close corner, and thick drops of perspiration were standing on her glowing face. Every one knows it is not very pleasant to have a moist, adhesive child (however dear that child may be) hanging to the neck, when the thermometer is above ninety degrees, and the very contact of the lightest garment is oppressive. Poor Mrs. Fay was an invalid, subject to sick headaches and palpi-

tations of the heart, and many other nervous pains, which, though they did not confine her to the bed, made her extremely sensitive to noise and annoyances of any kind. It is not to be wondered then that instead of reciprocating with maternal tenderness the smothering caresses of Rena, she tried to liberate herself as speedily as possible from the moist little arms that squeezed her so tightly.

“Oh! mercy!” she cried, panting for breath, “go away, child. You suffocate me to death! Yes, yes, run out doors and play, if you will—only don’t make a noise. Go off into the fields, where I can’t hear you. There—go—don’t tease me any more.”

One more rapturous kiss, and Rena bounded through the door.

“Stop, child! your bonnet. You are going without anything on your head into the broiling sun. When *will* you learn to obey? Haven’t I told you a thousand times *never* to go out without a bonnet?”

Mrs. Fay spoke of a *bonnet* from habit; but having found it impossible to keep a bonnet on Rena’s head in such a manner as to protect her face, she had adopted a large, broad-brimmed straw-hat, such as little boys wear, in its stead. She had made use of every expedient woman’s invention could suggest, to fasten the bonnet on the head of the child, so as to elude her efforts to throw it off. She had tied the strings in double knots,—she had sewed the deep pasteboard, which constituted the framework of the bonnet, so closely together, that her little round face seemed lost in the distance and obscurity; but Rena had a way of emerging from its depths the moment she was abroad, that was quite supernatural. Without breaking the knots or stitches, she *would* have her face thrust out into the sunshine, careless of the fervid rays that dyed her rosy cheeks with brown. The hat she was willing to wear. It did not fetter the elastic movements of her neck; it did not

shut out the free, blessed air of heaven. She could feel the cool, fluttering wings of the wind fan her as she passed ; her view was not confined to one little vista in the foreground. She had really conceived a passion for her broad-brimmed, boyish straw-hat. She petted and adorned it. She would make wreaths of wild flowers, and twist them round the crown,—then, taking a little crooked stick in her hand, sit down on the grass among the lambs, and imagine herself a shepherdess, for she had heard her father read aloud about such things, and her bright imagination seized upon everything that was picturesque and beautiful, to weave into the web of her young thoughts. She was a child of impulse, enthusiasm, sensibility,—full of bright, original ideas, and when she was free, free in the air, free as the birds, the lambs, or any out-of-door living thing, she was the happiest of the happy—the wildest of the wild. When all alone, she would sometimes burst into a wild fit of loud, wild laughter, at her own bright, joyous fancies, that would ring like a bell through the whole yard, and then her mother, clapping her hands to her head, would exclaim—

“ Oh ! that child—that child ! She will be the death of me.”

And “ that child ” would be summoned at once into the house, as she had been that very afternoon, and condemned, as a penalty, to sit in the corner, without moving hand or foot. Mrs. Fay was a scrupulously neat lady. She never allowed a fold of her dress to be out of place, or a spot to sully its purity. Rena was the most careless little creature in the world. She was always tearing her frocks by climbing trees and jumping fences ; she was always soiling them by tumbling down in the mud or sand, for she never looked where she was going. She went dancing along, looking up in the air, twisting her neck this way and that, to see the birds fly higher and higher, till they became mere specks on

the dark-blue ether, till she came in contact with some root or branch or stone, and down she would fall, to her own astonishment. She forgot she had not wings, like a bird, she wished for them so often.

Rena now stood before her mother, while she tied the large straw-hat under her chin. At least she tried to stand still, but she could not help jumping up and down occasionally, to beguile the time, which seemed very long to her.

“Now mind, and go out softly,” said Mrs. Fay, “or I shall call you back.”

Rena stole along on tip-toe, looking back at every step, till she had crossed the threshold, then away she ran through the garden-gate down the gravel path, by the long row of currant bushes, the pear trees loaded with fruit, the apple trees with branches bending to the ground, and, attracted by the fragrance of the new-mown hay, that embalmed the whole atmosphere, flew down a green lane, till she came where the bright, sharp scythes were gleaming in the sun, and the long grass made music as it fell, with a soft rustle, beneath their strokes.

She stood peeping through the fence, for a few moments, thinking she had never seen anything so beautiful as that broad field, dotted with mounds of mown grass, drying in the sun, and striped with long swathes, freshly cut, giving out a pure, healthy odour, sweeter than the breath of roses. The labourers, strong, brown men, standing in a row, with their white shirt sleeves rolled up above the elbows, now swinging to the right the brilliant steel, then bringing it down to the left with a sweeping curve, wading along, knee-deep, through a sea of verdure; she never could be tired of watching their movements. In another part of the field, where the mounds had been heaped up longest, the grass was driest,—there was a broad cart, drawn by a pair of dark-brown, white-faced oxen, fat, sleek, strong, and lazy, chewing their cud with indefatiga-

ble gravity, while the labourers tossed the hay, with their light pitchforks, into the cart, already apparently nearly filled, but which was to heave higher and higher its odoriferous burden, —on the top of the load, trampling down the hay as it fell in rustling showers round him—tall and straight, with broad shoulders and muscular arms—Rena beheld her father; and he looked very magnificent in her eyes, standing up so high, with his back to the western sky, defined so boldly on its back-ground of crimson and gold;—and standing by her father's side, there was a little figure, somewhat taller than herself, with a straw-hat, just like her own, only it was not tied under the chin; and it wore trowsers instead of a frock; it was her little brother, Henry, a year or two older than herself, but of a more slender and delicate frame, so that they might have passed for the same age. He was very fair, and had beautiful black, curling hair, that made a rich framework for his feminine features. He inherited his mother's delicacy of constitution and beauty of lineament—for Mrs. Fay was uncommonly pretty, and every one said he was her favourite. He was certainly a much more manageable child than Rena, more quiet and neat. He was fond of having his hair smooth and his clothes clean, and of being thought pretty and sweet, as he had so often been told he was.

Rena did not care how she looked; all she wanted was to be loved; what it was for, she did not care. Love, the sunshine of love within, the sunshine of heaven without—this was all she asked.

Once, when her mother was combing Henry's hair, and smoothing and twisting it round her fingers, then letting it drop in shining ringlets, on which she gazed with lingering delight—Rena suddenly exclaimed:

“What's the reason, mama, God didn't make *my* hair curl like brother's?”

“Hush, child; you mustn't ask such strange questions.”

"But I want to know the reason. I do know it. God loves brother better than he does me, so he did not take the trouble to curl mine. But I'll curl it myself, when it gets long enough to twist round my fingers. Please, mama, don't cut it so short any more. Henry looks like a girl, and I like a boy."

"You *are* more like a boy, indeed, Rena, with your rude, boisterous ways. You really ought to have been a boy."

"I wish I was a boy," said Rena, as many a wild little girl has done before her—though the germs of passionate womanhood lay deep within her bosom.

We left Rena peeping through the fence at the haymakers mowing the grass, tossing and trampling the hay, hurrying to get through the work before the setting of the sun and the falling of the dew. She had stood still wonderfully long for her; but an irresistible desire to be mounted on the load, where her father and Henry were standing, impelled her to climb over the fence, flit along by the gleaming scythes, roll over the hay mounds as they came in her path, till she found herself almost under the heavy feet of the oxen.

"Rena, you little spirit! what are you doing there?" called out her father, from his green top-loft.

"Rena," said a soft, childish voice, "get up—the oxen will tread on you."

"Take me up there, papa. Let me ride home with you and brother on the hay-top."

"Well, toss her up here," said Mr. Fay, wiping his reeking forehead, and stretching out his strong arms towards his little girl, who was already lifted by one of the haymakers, high in the air; "toss her up and I will catch her. Gently—there—I've caught her. That's a brave girl! Now we've got a load. Gee! haw!—home, white faces."

Slowly and majestically the "white faces" began their march, the hay sweeping down on either side of the vehicle,

like a lordly drapery,—the stalwart farmer still standing erect on the top, his little, curly-headed, fair-cheeked boy clinging to one hand, and Rena perched upon his shoulder, like a wild oird on a forest oak, sending out her merry laughter on the dewy air, that began to roll in a soft mist up from the bosom of the river that skirted the valley;—like a triumphal car it rolled up the green avenue, the heavy steps of the animals falling with a soft, crushing sound on the rich velvet carpet spread out beneath their feet;—the large barn doors swung back at its approach, Mr. Fay bowed his tall form as it passed through, and Rena thrust her head into his bosom to avoid the contact of the upper beam.

“Now, little ones, run to your mother,” cried the farmer, tossing Rena from his arms into the soft bed on which they were standing. “Ready, boys!—off with the load—the sun will soon be down.”

The hay was soon sent drifting through the air by the farmer and his “merry men all,” and deposited on the ample loft. The cattle came up from the meadows, and stood meekly at the barn-yard gate, waiting for the milk-maid’s hand. The sheep ran bleating homeward—the little lambs tumbling over each other—the calves kicked and frolicked in the yard—the hens went gravely to roost, conversing in a low, motherly sort of way, as if they did not wish to disturb anybody with their domestic matters. Everything was assuming a quiet, comfortable, serene appearance. Mr. Fay shut up his barn for the night. It was his pride—his glory—that noble, new barn, and he loved it next to his wife and children. The house was an old family mansion, handed down from father to son, kept in excellent repair, very neat and comfortable; but the paint was faded, worn off here and there, in irregular patches; and an occasional new shingle in the roof showed that time had commenced its ravages on the ancestral building. But the barn was new, and of magnificent proportions. It was painted

a light corn colour, in honour, perhaps, of the golden grain; the fencing all around was new and of a snowy white, contrasting strongly with the deep green of the clover fields on either side. It was evident the world was going well with Mr. Fay, and all his neighbours rejoiced in his prosperity, for he was a man of strong understanding improved by reading, and they respected him; he was of incorruptible integrity, and they esteemed him; he was kind and good, and they loved him; he filled offices of honour and trust in his native town; he was selectman, representative, colonel in the militia, justice of peace. It was a great mistake to call him plain Mister, when he answered to so many titles. Colonel Fay, as he was usually called, must henceforth be honoured by his military cognomen. He liked it better than Squire, for his father was a revolutionary officer, and he inherited from him a martial spirit and a glowing patriotism.

Col. Fay, having closed his barn, opened the gate, that admitted the meek-looking cows to their saucy, bounding young ones, and walked leisurely towards the house. He was weary, for he had been toiling hard, but he was grateful for the coming rest—grateful to God, for the swelling bounties of the year. It was a glorious hay-making season. The warm sun had dried the rich grass almost as soon as it fell beneath the mower's scythe—no sudden shower had drenched it, when about to be borne from the field, just shorn of its green honours. It was all mown, mostly dried and housed, ready for the necessities of the long, bleak winter. Full of grateful emotions for these blessings, he lifted his hat from his brow, which contrasted beautifully in its still unsunned whiteness with the rest of his sun and wind-browned face, and turned reverently towards the setting sun, whose crimson disk, so large, so grand, so glorious, was just rolling down the slope of day. The air played cool and lovingly about his moistened hair, and the leaves of the young apple trees rustled softly

near him. Oh! the soft, summer twilight is a blessed hour for the farmer. He felt it so, and would have lingered long, gazing on that rich prospect, all his own, but he thought of his wife and children, and hastened his steps. He knew his wife was nervous, and did not like to have supper kept waiting, and such was his habitual courtesy to her, that he would never sit down at the table without exchanging his labour-soiled garments for the customary suit of a country gentleman. Pausing at the well, whose long sweep sent its dark outline on the gold of the heavens, and whose "old oaken, iron-bound, and moss-covered bucket" hung, filled with crystal waters, wooing his thirst, he poised it on the brink of the curb, and drank as only the thirsty labourer can drink.

"Bless God for cold water," said he to himself; "and bless God for a good, thoughtful wife," continued he, as he saw the ready basin, the clean, white napkin, and the odorous soap, all prepared for his evening ablution; "and bless God, too, for dear, sweet, affectionate children," was the language of his heart, as he entered his home, where he was always welcomed as a household divinity.

It was not till after he was seated quietly at the supper-table, that he remembered that Rena's bright little face had not appeared as usual at the door to greet him, that he had not felt her light weight on the rounds of his chair behind, as he was sure to do, as soon as he had blessed his bounteous board.

"Where's little Snowbird?" cried he.

"I haven't seen her since you returned from the hay-field," replied her mother. "Henry came in without his sister."

"Harry," said his father, "tell me where Rena is?"

Henry lifted his curly head out of a large bowl of bread and milk, and quietly answered—

"I don't know, sir."

"When did you see her last?"

“In the barn.”

“When?”

“On the hay-cart.”

“Strange you have not missed the child sooner,” said he to his wife.

“I did miss her—but thought she was safe with you.”

Col. Fay left the table, and going to the door, called “Rena” so loud, that Bravo, the house-dog, waked up and barked with all his might. No answer—no bounding feet came at his summons. He called at the foot of the stairs, but all was still.

“Where can the child be?” he exclaimed; a hot flush shooting across his temples.

“Where, indeed?” repeated his wife, turning still paler. Henry put away his bread and milk—he could not eat any more, because sister’s bowl was standing there untouched. Rachel, the woman of all work, was despatched to the next neighbours, to make inquiries, while Col. Fay, in a fever of apprehension, was searching every nook and corner of the house and yard, even unconsciously opening the bureau drawers, in search of the missing one. At any other hour of the day, her absence would not have been so surprising, but she never was known to leave the house when her father was expected, at the close of his daily labour. To be the first to greet him, to carry his hat in one hand, and to cling to him tightly with the other, was her joy and ambition. It is no wonder he missed her. It is no wonder his heart palpitated with nameless apprehension. At last the whole family were assembled in the yard, where several of the neighbours, with their children, were also collected, attracted by that strange mingling of sympathy and curiosity, which every one must be conscious of having experienced, on similar occasions.

Wonder soon deepened into fear—the daring child! she was always running into danger! What was become of her?

The well! Mrs. Fay thought of the well, so deep and dangerous, and with a conviction that Rena was weltering at the bottom, she uttered an hysterical scream, holding Henry tight in her arms, to save him from the same terrible fate. But another apprehension equally dreadful, had seized upon the father's heart. The last time he had seen her, she was rolling from the top of the cart, on to the loft, preparatory, as he supposed, to jumping down to the floor. The men in their haste *might* have thrown upon her a mountain of hay, whose superincumbent weight *must* have smothered her, as well as her faint, dying cries.—Rena was his darling, and the very possibility of such a fate was agony to him.

“Follow me,” cried he, to the men, who, though so weary, were roused to intense action by the distress of the family; “follow me, for as God hears me, I do believe we have smothered my child in the hay-mow!”

A mellow light still lingered abroad, but dark shadows were hanging round the rafters, and in the interior of the barn, a lantern was brought and suspended from a beam, so that the rays fell directly on the new-mown hay. One of the labourers, in his excitement, caught up a pitchfork, and was about to plunge it into the mow, when Col. Fay arrested his arm and exclaimed in a voice of thunder—“Great heaven! what are you doing?” at the same time hurling the instrument through the door, with such force, that every portion of the iron prongs was buried in the earth.

It was astonishing with what rapidity the fresh hay was thrown off, till it all lay light and high and odoriferous in the middle of the floor.

“Thank God!” cried the father, wiping the sweat drops of agony from his forehead, “she is not here! But where is she? Where is my little Rena? Her mother is right: she must be drowned.” And Col. Fay wrung his hands, and bitter drops fell from his eyes.

“I dare say the child has fallen asleep somewhere,” said one of the men, consolingly, “if we only knew where it was. I remember—no, *I* don’t remember it, for I was but a crawling baby then;—but I’ve heard my mother tell it many a time, what a hue and cry there was once about *my* being lost. They were looking for me all night, and in the morning, when they took up the ashes, they found me fast asleep in the brick ash-hole, right by the side of the chimney. It was a nice warm place, and I slept soundly. When they first saw me they took my red head for a large coal of fire.”

While he was speaking, Col. Fay, gathering hope from his tone, was sweeping, with a rapid glance, the height of the barn. There were three lofts rising one above another, like immense cushions, with long, heavy fringes, rustling in the night air, the upper very near the roof, where innumerable swallows made their summer nests.

“There was a ladder reaching to the upper loft, this morning,” said the Colonel, starting; “I don’t see it now.”

“It was in the way of the oxen, when they turned,” said the red-headed man, who was lost in the ash-hole; “and I carried it out doors.”

Col. Fay did not wait one second, before he had brought the ladder, placed it in its former position, and taking the lantern in his left hand, began rapidly to ascend. It was so like his wild little Rena to mount up among the swallows’ nests.

“Rena—Rena!” he cried, hanging the lantern on the topmost round of the ladder, and springing upon the loft, he shaded his eyes with his hand, and looked anxiously round him. “Rena, if you are alive, hear and answer me.”

Just before him there was a little heap, which now began to move; a dishevelled head emerged from the hay, and the little Snowbird—for such was the pet name she bore—suddenly awakened by the voice of her father, and frightened at finding

herself in such a strange place, leaped up on his neck, and clung to him, her large eyes looking strangely into his.

“Why, Rena! you little witch-cat—you naughty child!” cried he, hugging her so tightly as almost to squeeze the breath out of her body,—“what do you mean by frightening us so? How in the world came you here? And what did you come for?”

“What did I come for?” repeated Rena, rubbing her eyes vehemently. “I came up to see the swallows.”

“Well, if you ever frighten us so again—” said her father, descending the ladder, with his lost child in his arms. He did not say what he would do, he was certainly too glad and grateful to punish her now. A shout of joy welcomed her below, and she was carried in a kind of triumph into the house, where her mother, who was perfectly prostrated by anxiety and terror, received her with so much joy—so many mingling kisses and tears, Rena did not say to her this time, “You don’t love me, mama;” and Mrs. Fay forgot to scold her for being such an incorrigible, unmanageable child.

But the next morning, when all her nerves seemed un-sheathed, in consequence of the terrors she had suffered, she could not help upbraiding Rena for her unconquerable recklessness, adding, as she generally did, as a kind of peroration, “This child will certainly be the death of me!”

Her father, too, gave her a long and serious lecture on her rashness and thoughtlessness of the feelings of others, which melted her into tears of penitence and remorse.

“Say you love me, papa, and I never *will* do so any more.”

No!—she never did climb up on the hay-mow again, where the swallows flew twittering in through the little Gothic windows, cut for their accommodation in the high, pointed roof, but she did a great many other wild and daring deeds, that set her poor mother’s nerves on edge, and made her the talk and admiration of the whole neighbourhood.

CHAPTER II.

“Thy downcast glances, grave but cunning,
As fringed eyelids rise and fall ;
Thy shyness, swiftly from me running,
Is infantine coquetry all—
But yet, for all thy merry look,
Thy frisks and wiles, the time is coming
When thou shalt sit in cheerless nook,
The weary spell or horn-book thumbing.”

JOANNA BAILLIE.

“I DON'T want to go home with Aunt Debby. Please, mama, don't tell me to go. I will stay in the house all day, if you want me to. I will be good and quiet all the time; I will be the best girl in the world, if you won't send me away with Aunt Debby.”

“I don't send you away, my child,” answered Mrs. Fay, with a troubled countenance; “but Aunt Debby wants you to go and make her a visit; and it is very kind of her to ask you. She knows how sickly I am, and that I can't take care of you as I ought; and as she has no little girl of her own, you will be company for her, too. You must not offend her by letting her see that you dislike to go. She will teach you to knit and sew, and make a little woman of you.”

The drooping spirits of the grieved child flashed up, and her cheeks reddened with anger.

“I don't want to learn to knit and sew. I don't want to be a little woman. I never will be one. God made me a child, and I mean to stay one as long as I live! Aunt Debby *shan't* make a woman of me—and I *won't* go home with her.”

“What is that you are saying, Rena?” said her father, who happened to enter at this moment, fixing his clear blue eye sternly upon her,—“is that the way you talk to your mother?”

The little rebel was quelled in a moment.

“Oh, papa! pray forgive me! I didn’t mean to say it to mama. I was telling myself that I didn’t want to go home with Aunt Debby.”

“Rena, that is not the truth. Don’t tell me a falsehood. I can forgive anything in the world but falsehood.”

The frown, she dreaded more than the lightning’s flash, darkened her father’s brow. Ashamed of her prevarication, wretched for having incurred his anger, and miserable at the idea of being placed under the authority of Aunt Debby, the poor child buried her face in her hands and sobbed aloud. Col. Fay could not resist the influence of her tears. He took her kindly on his lap, wiped away the tears as fast as they fell, with the corner of her apron, and gently reasoned with her on the unhappy effects of a passionate temper. He told her how much her mother suffered from debility, and how necessary it was for her to be kept quiet in body and mind; that Aunt Debby was very kind and good, and would teach her many things that every little girl ought to learn, but which her mother was not well enough to attend to; that her aunt had come a long journey on purpose to convey her home with her, and that it would be very ungrateful in them to refuse; that she, her aunt, lived in a beautiful country, where the berries and wild flowers grew and blossomed, without anybody’s thinking about them, and where the blue mountains were, that she loved to look at every night when the sun was setting in gold.

Calmly talking, gently reasoning, kindly looking, he not only brought his quick-feeling, passionate, but warm-hearted little girl to submission, but even induced her to look forward.

with the quick-changing impressions of childhood, to Aunt Debby's distant home with anticipations of pleasure, connected with the wild berries and blossoms, the property of God, not man, which children could gather at their will, and the blue mountains which her imagination had converted into the thrones of the angels. Colonel Fay whispered a few more words in her ear, and, sliding down from his arms, she went softly up to her mother, and told her she was very sorry she had been so naughty, that she would go home with Aunt Debby, and she might even make a woman of her, if she pleased.

It was not without many heart-struggles and many misgivings that Colonel Fay had consented to part with this wild, wayward, but affectionate and interesting child. His wife, whose beauty had attracted his youthful fancy, was prevented both by intellectual inferiority and physical weakness, from being a congenial and enlivening companion. Constitutionally indolent, she never could be persuaded that exercise in the open air or cold baths were of any avail. With an insane passion for medicine, she was always applying some patent remedies, which only increased the nervous irritation she was trying to subdue. Too feeble to take a broom in her hand, she would sit in the rocking-chair and sew, making others feel as nervous as herself by the combined motion of the chair and needle. Colonel Fay had a generous chivalry of character, which, had he lived in the days of knight-errantry, would have won for him immortal renown. He had a tenderness for women in general, and for his wife in particular, that had a softening influence on his voice and the glance of his eye whenever he addressed them. He felt for his pale, faded, but still pretty wife, the pity one cherishes for a delicate child. He listened with patience to her complaints, answered all her appeals to sympathy with unwearied attention—in truth, made her selfish by excessive indulgence. People will be

unjust sometimes, and there were those who pitied Colonel Fay more than his wife, who thought many of her ills imaginary, and believed that if she chose to exert herself more, she could be a helpmate and companion to her noble and industrious husband. Man loves to feel his power and strength, the dependence of others on him for happiness. He loves to feel himself the lord of the creation—to stand like the mountain oak, braving the lightning and breasting the storm, rejoicing in the close embrace of the vine that, divorced from the vigorous trunk, would fall withering to the ground. This is the reason that strong and powerful men so often love feeble and delicate women—proud and intellectual men those of weak and superficial minds. It is certain that Colonel Fay loved his wife with unabated tenderness, and the slightest request uttered by her soft, complaining voice, had the authority of a command. He loved Henry, his son, his first-born, his fair, ringleted boy, with his prim, quiet ways and *stay-in-door* qualities ; but Rena, as we said before, was his darling, and his heart yearned over her, with a love that baffled description.

At night, after Mrs. Fay had retired to bed, which she always did at an early hour, and he sat reading in the sitting-room which opened into their sleeping apartment, Rena would steal noiselessly out of her little trundle-bed, and, gliding on tip-toe to her father, would get into his lap and nestle in his bosom. Her mother always made her and Henry go to bed by dark : and Harry slept soon and soundly after his ample supper of bread and milk, but Rena was the most wakeful child in the world, and she would have given a kingdom, had it been in her possession, for the privilege of sitting up to a later hour.

But Mrs. Fay adhered to the good old-fashioned law of *early to bed* as immutably as the Medes and Persians did to their ancient rules, and it was to her a moment of devout thanksgiving when the restless Rena was limited to the range of a

pair of sheets and a pillow. To bed she was obliged to go; but sleep she could not and would not; and often, when Rachel came, long after she supposed the children soundly asleep, to tuck up the counterpane and arrange the bedclothes for the night, she would be startled by seeing the large, bright eyes of Rena staring in her face, like two young moons. Perhaps it was wrong in Colonel Fay to sanction Rena in this covert act of disobedience; but it was so pleasant to have her folded up in his arms, like a sweet flower at shut of day—to see her eyes, full of strange intelligence, following his down the page he was reading—to read aloud to her some passage, which he made clear to her comprehension,—and then gradually as the dews of sleep fell with soft slumberous weight on her eyelids, to feel her head press gently on his breast, and her breath, the pure breath of childhood, curl along his cheek;—all this was very pleasant, and he used to watch for the light patter of her little bare feet, and their sound reminded him of the falling of an April rain on the tender spring grass. What startling questions she would ask about God, and the mystery of her being! He sometimes thought, when he looked upon her in the freshness of her being, animated by such precocious intelligence, that she was a beautiful spirit sent from another sphere—“trailing those clouds of glory,”—which show they come from God, “who is our home.”

And this child was to be consigned to the care of Aunt Debby, that her mother might be relieved from the task of managing her—a task for which she was unfitted in body and mind. Was Aunt Debby qualified for the charge? Colonel Fay sighed as he made this self-interrogation; for, though he had perfect confidence in the goodness of her heart and the uprightness of her principles, he was well aware of the eccentricities of her character—the result of strange and controlling circumstances,—and feared they would clash too often with the peculiarities of Rena’s.

Aunt Debby, alias Mrs. Wright, the sister of Colonel Fay, was a childless widow, with an independent property, consisting of a large and beautiful farm, and a considerable sum of money at interest. A lawsuit, which was instituted against her, had called her from home at a season of the year when her superintendence was most required over her own farm; but necessity stops not for inconvenience, and Aunt Debby never hesitated where duty was concerned. Before she returned, she resolved to extend her journey and carry back with her the little niece, whom she had not seen since she was an infant, scarcely more than a span long. Perhaps she had conceived the idea of adopting the child as her own, and wished to mould her character by her own influences; perhaps she was actuated by pity for the feeble and inefficient mother; or it might be, that she felt in her heart the cravings of unsatisfied maternity, and longed for an object to fill the aching void.

“Come here, child, and let me look at you,” was her first salutation to Rena, who had the horror, common to all sensitive children, of being looked at by strangers. Not daring to disobey, she walked awkwardly towards her, hanging her head, with her finger in her mouth.

“Hold up your head and take your finger out of your mouth. There, you look better now. I don’t allow any crooked children about me. Very good face; not as pretty as Henry’s, though; I am glad of it. Straight hair; I am glad of that, too. Kinkey heads are a great trouble. If I had that little fellow with me, I’d shave off his girl-ringlets and make a man of him. You look more like a boy than he does. I like you the better for it. Well, don’t you want to go home with me?”

“No.”

“No what, child?”

“No, ma’am.”

“Why not? Don’t you like me?”

“No, ma’am.”

“Your child is honest,” said she, turning to her brother

“she has not been taught to flatter; I like her the better for it.”

Rena, as soon as she saw her aunt engaged in conversation with her father, sidled back to her seat, and sat gazing at her through her long, curling lashes, with the most intense curiosity. She had heard a great deal said about Aunt Debby—of her wealth and independence of character, her influence on those around her, and she had formed an image in her mind of something grand and magnificent. She had a vague idea that she carried a wand in her hand, which, like the Fairy’s in “Cinderella, or the Little Glass Slipper,” could turn pumpkins into beautiful carriages, and mice into footmen with golden liveries.

“Like her!” thought she, as she perused every lineament of her feature with an unreceding gaze; “I never shall like her as long as I live; I wouldn’t go home with her to save her life.”

There was certainly nothing in the external appearance of Aunt Debby to attract the admiration of a child; and at this particular time she was divested of one of her greatest ornaments. Her hair had fallen off sometime previous, in consequence of a bilious fever, and a young crop, about two inches long, now covered her head. Her friends tried to induce her to wear a cap till time should replace the tresses of which she had been despoiled. But she disdained such abominations,—never, even at night, allowing herself to be encumbered by such an unnecessary appendage. This short hair, black as ebony, thick and glossy, stood up around her forehead, giving her a fierce, warlike aspect in the eyes of the wondering Rena. Her eyes were large, black, and sparkling, moving from object to object with inconceivable rapidity. Her nose had a fine, Roman outline; and her teeth were white, regular, and beautiful. She was rather small, remarkably erect, very neat in her dress—which was a plain, black silk, unrelieved by white lace or muslin—undecorated by jewelry or ribbons. There

was nothing soft, or flowing, or shading about her; and the short straight hair, which would have looked perfectly ridiculous on almost any other woman, did not seem out of place on Aunt Debby's well formed head.

There are some females with whom we never can associate the idea of love,—who have such perfect unity of character, we never can imagine them as forming the *half* of another. When we meet with a person of this description, we wonder by what invisible wires the electric spark was communicated to a kindred heart. We wonder if they ever walked under the silver light of the moon, listening to a music sweeter than the songs of angels, clasping with thrilling touch the mutual hand.

Rena was not old enough to make these reflections; but she repeated to herself a dozen times, with a little nod of the head, of which she was perfectly unconscious, "She never could, never would love Aunt Debby."

The morning came, when Rena was to leave for the first time her native home—father, mother, and brother. It was a great event in her young life. She had never rode in a stage, and there it stood, with four white horses, all with arching necks and flowing manes, right before their door. She saw her trunk strapped on behind,—only think of her having a trunk of her own, with her name on it! There was novelty, there was importance in all this, and her heart throbbed with expectation. But when her poor pale-faced mother kissed her and wept over her, and told her she wished she had not let her go,—when she felt Henry's soft curls on her neck, as he gave her the fond parting kiss,—and more than all, when her father clasped her in his arms, pressed her to his heart, praying God to bless and protect his darling little *Snowbird*, while the tears glistened in his loving blue eyes,—she wept and sobbed aloud, declaring her firm resolution to stay, and not go away with Aunt Debby.

“What nonsense is this?” cried Aunt Debby, taking the struggling child and swinging her lightly into the stage, then jumping in, before Colonel Fay had time to assist her: “Good bye—good bye; it will be all over in a minute.”

In a second the stage was rattling through the yard, raking under the low-spreading boughs of the trees, that stood ancient sentinels by the gateway. Rena put her head out of the window, and strained her eyes, blinded as they were with bitter tears, to catch the last glimpse of her father’s tall form, of the beautiful sycamores, whose round balls she so much loved to play with, the sturdy oaks, whose shapely acorns with their cup-like shells were the favourite ornaments of her baby-house;—then of the stone wall, so nice and compact, whose level top was her daily promenade. Swiftly they all vanished, and feeling her situation rather inconvenient, with her neck twisted one way and the stage bounding along with the velocity of lightning the other, she drew back on her seat and studied the profile of Aunt Debby’s green silk bonnet, thinking it had a severe and forbidding look.

“That’s right, little one,” said her aunt, in a kind tone, putting her arm around her and drawing her close to her; “it is dangerous to have the head bobbing about in the window in that way. Lay it in my lap, and go to sleep, when you are tired; we shall ride all night.”

There was something sublime in the idea of riding all the long, dark night, behind those white, flying horses, and Rena resolved she would not sleep, but watch the stars as they came out one by one, winking at her with their bright eyes, and perhaps she could see the doors of heaven open and shut, to let the radiant creatures in and out. But before one candle of the dark was lighted, to illumine the magnificent dome of night, the little traveller was soundly sleeping on the lap of Aunt Debby, whose arm still encircled her, and who ere long sunk into sympathetic slumbers, as the irregular vibrations of her green bonnet evidently showed.

CHAPTER III.

“And as they sweep
On sounding skates, a thousand different ways,
In circling poise, swift as the winds, along,
The then gay land is maddened all to joy,”
* * * “Eager in rapid sleds,
Their vigorous youth in bold contentions wheel
The long-resounding course.”

THOMSON.

SUNNY DELL lay at the foot of a green slope, which seemed to be the last heave of a mountain that rose grandly and protectingly behind—a smooth, rich plain spread out in a green plateau in front, where the oak and the walnut made ample umbrellas for the cattle that gathered under their shade. A beautiful stream, dashing impetuously down the mountain's side, making a headlong plunge, with something of the cataract's grandeur, then rolling over a gentler declivity and forming here and there silver cascades, meandered round this plain, murmuring, gurgling, singing, and sparkling, reflecting the blue of the heavens and the green of the earth. The hum of industry mingled with the murmurs and songs of the silver cascades, for a mill was erected near them, so that the bright, merry waters worked, as well as danced and sung, the long sunny day. Nothing about Aunt Debby was allowed to eat the bread of idleness; she worked herself, and everything around her must work.

The house was a tall, ancestral-looking building, with a sharp-pointed roof, that cut the sky like a wedge, on the extremities of which rose large white martin boxes, perforated with innumerable little windows. A double porch, whose pil

lars reached to the summit of the building, and which were supported on blocks of gray granite, projected square and broad in front—and wings with roofs, that slanted nearly to the ground, extended on either side. With its mountain background stern and cold, its rich tapestry-work in front, embroidered with living silver, its romantic surroundings and commanding site, Sunny Dell was a beautiful and picturesque spot. Owning so imposing a residence, and possessing so independent and self-relying a character, it is not strange that Aunt Debby exercised a great influence in society. The only fear she had was of being thought too amiable. Rather than seem to seek the praise of the world, by the exercise of loving-kindness and tender charity, she would assume a harshness of manner foreign to her feelings, than satisfy in private the wants of her better nature. Strong and often bitter in her prejudices, immovable in her ideas of right and wrong, warm in her feelings, blunt and generally cold in her manners, she reigned over her household with the absoluteness of a queen, and the rectitude of a judge.

One of her first duties was to commence with Rena that system of discipline she intended to pursue with her. She could read already, but she must not be allowed to read at random, just as the spirit moved her. She must have a stated hour for that occupation. Then she must learn to knit and to sew, and have her regular tasks assigned, so as to know the value of time. We will not attempt to describe the process of Rena's learning to knit. It was so long, so complicated, so heartrending. We cannot tell how many times the yarn was put over the wrong finger, how often the stitch was dropped, racing down to the very selvage of the stocking and making an ugly hole when it was at last taken up; or how the yarn being woollen, fretted the soft skin of her tender fingers; or how many tears bedewed the sharp-pointed needles that *would* stick into her flesh, hold them as she might, or how many

times Aunt Debby's thimble rapped her pupil's head before she accomplished the weighty task. She did know how to sew in a kind of romantic manner, with very long needle frills, making long, skipping stitches, looking off half the time; but Aunt Debby taught her to condense her labours, and confine her attention, by the charm of the glittering thimble, never very harshly, but briskly applied. This was an old-fashioned kind of discipline, under which Aunt Debby had flourished marvellously herself, and she transmitted it to her descendants as their right.

"Oh! I never shall get to the end of this!" said Rena, looking despairingly the whole length of a sheet her aunt had given her to sew up. "Never," she repeated, emphatically—the seam apparently lengthened as she gained—

"Never is a long word for a little girl," said Aunt Debby, "we don't let them use it."

"It is so warm—my fingers stick so—"

"Well, run and wash your hands, child; always mind and have clean fingers when you sew."

"No, I didn't mean that, it's my needle that is so sticky."

"Here, put it through this emery ball."

It was a beautiful ripe-looking, red woollen strawberry, and Rena became so absorbed in its beauties she forgot the purpose for which it was given her.

"Oh!" said she, bringing it near her mouth, "what a nice strawberry! I wish it was a real one, it would taste so good. Aunt, don't the strawberries grow here? Papa said the berries sprang up here without your knowing it."

"Goodness, how the child prattles! Look, Rena, see how high the sun is; you have not more than half finished that seam; it must be done before the sun sets—remember!"

"Please, aunt, let me go to the top of the stairs and sew down; I can work so much quicker."

An assent being given, Rena flew to the top of the long

flight of stairs, her arms filled with her large piece of work; then counting the stairs, she folded the sheet into as many divisions as there were stairs, and sticking pins into each fold, began to labour as if her life depended on her exertions. As soon as she reached the first crease she descended to the second stair, and so on till the whole flight was gone through, and the long seam, thus subdivided, completely finished. Aunt Debby gave her an approving smile when she deposited the work in her lap, and praised the mathematical and original method she had adopted to facilitate the task. After that Rena used to knit and sew *down the stairs* every day; and it was astonishing how much her labours were lightened by the motion.

But this confinement was hard and irksome to her, and her heart often rebelled against her aunt, and wandered back to her own dear home, to her pretty, delicate-looking mother, her fair young brother, and to the father who was the idol of her affections. When she was in this insurrectionary state, she would look down from her airy perch on her aunt, and think she looked very ugly with her short black hair sticking up like a grenadier's all over her head. She thought she hated her, and had a great temptation to tell her so; but when, her task being completed, she was suffered to run abroad round Sunny Dell, to dance over the green lawn and mimic the leap of the cascade, and the warble of the birds, she felt remorse for the hard feelings she had cherished. She loved her aunt, the grass, the water, the birds, every animated and inanimate thing. She loved God, too, who had put her in such a beautiful world and given her a heart full of love and joy

When she returned home, after these wild rambles, with her spirit saturated with the loveliness of nature, she would hang caressingly round her aunt and ask her if she did not love her, and if she was not good; and Aunt Debby would

take her in her lap and pat her head softly, *without the thimble*; but she would have been ashamed to have had any one know how dearly she already loved the child, and how ardently she wished it was her own.

Rena became happier after a while, for she had a companion who shared in the lessons she received from Aunt Debby in sewing, knitting, and reading. Stella Lightner was an orphan child, who belonged to the parish, but having attracted the attention of the ladies by her extreme beauty, they resolved to take her home and *divide* her among them. She thus lived a kind of visiting life, petted by one, tolerated by another, and perhaps unkindly treated by a third. It is well known how soon the sparks of impulsive benevolence die away, too often leaving behind the ashes of regret. The romantic interest which Stella's beauty and orphanage excited gradually cooled, while the burden of her maintenance remained. There were some, however, who, actuated by principle rather than impulse, continued to feel the same tenderness for their protégée, and would willingly have kept her as an abiding member of their household; but this the association would not allow, as the praise of charity due to the *body* must not be engrossed by any particular *member*. Aunt Debby's turn came round, when Rena had been with her about a month; and, to the inexpressible joy of Rena, Stella was domiciliated at Sunny Dell.

A beautiful child is certainly the most beautiful object in the world. The incarnation of innocence, sweetness, and grace; fresh from the hands of its Creator, before temptation has obscured, or sin marred or passion darkened the image of the Deity; it comes before the world-weary eye, a flower sparkling with the dews of Paradise, and breathing the fragrance of Heaven.

No one could look upon Stella Lightner without thinking of all that is most sweet and lovely in the material and spirit-

ual world, without feeling all the poetry, all the music of their spirits wakened and stirring within them. The soft whiteness of the pearl was diffused over her forehead and neck, the beautiful carmine of the sea-shell was mellowed on her cheek. The sunbeams sported in her golden hair, and the stars of evening shone from the sapphire heaven of her eyes. This is no exaggerated description. This child of poverty and obscurity was one of those rare miracles of loveliness, which sometimes appear, to show of what exquisite beauty the human form is capable.

Rena, who had not one particle of envy or jealousy in her disposition, and who had a keen perception of the beautiful wherever it was seen, gazed with rapture on her young companion—clasping one hand in hers, and passing the other over her shining hair, she looked into her eyes, with a smile of ecstasy.

“Little girl,” she cried, “how pretty you are! How I shall love you! Brother Henry is pretty, but not half as pretty as you. His hair curls too, but it is black—Mine is straight—I wish it *did* curl like yours!”

“Nonsense!” said Aunt Debby, coming like a dash of cold water on Rena’s enthusiasm—“nonsense! your hair is a great deal better as it is. I would soon crop off her curls, if some of the ladies did not make such a fuss about them. And, Rena, you must not tell her she is pretty. It will make her vain, and I am afraid the poor child is vain enough already.”

“But God made her, aunt—she did not make herself; she can’t help being pretty.”

“I know it—it is a mere accident—not worth talking about. But the best child is the one that is most loved, no matter how she looks; and goodness and obedience make a child look pretty, whether she is so or not.”

Rena resolved that she always would be good and obedient, that she might be loved and thought pretty, and commenced

her knitting with unwonted zeal. With her aunt's permission she took Stella with her to the top of the stairs, which the young eaglet made her morning eyrie, and told her how, when she had knit round to the seam, she must come down one step, and they must see which should get to the goal first. She found Stella far behind her in handicraft, and as she would not leave her behind, she assisted her each time in completing her task, so that they might finish together, and play together on the green.

This morning was an epitome of their daily intercourse. In every lesson, in every task, Stella was a laggard and delinquent, and Rena toiled with double assiduity to shield her from blame and threatened punishment. If her deficiencies were too great to be covered by Rena's kindness, and she was kept in doors after the usual hour, Rena would remain by her side, sympathizing and comforting. She could not bear to see tears in Stella's beautiful eyes, and the sight of her aunt's thimble rapping on her golden curls sent a pang through her heart, that no punishment inflicted on herself could create. It never entered her mind that Stella might be idle and selfish, and that she claimed her assistance as a right, instead of asking it as a favour. With the pure, broad mantle of childish charity she covered every offence, and loved her the better, because she had made so many sacrifices for her.

Thus summer passed away, and autumn too. Stella remained longer than the allotted time, because Rena was so unhappy at the thought of being separated from her. Cold winter came on—and the green lawn was all covered with snow. But the little girls were not confined to the house on that account. Aunt Debby had great respect for exercise in the open air, and she never allowed any one near her to complain of the cold. Every one in the household must be up by day-light; not only up, but doing. She always wakened Rena and Stella herself, and if they began to rub their eyes and

turn over again, to have a little more slumber, she took them right out of their warm beds and set them shivering in the middle of the room, for the genial influence of a fire was not permitted to penetrate their sleeping apartment. They were glad enough to dress, so as to inhale a warmer atmosphere. Here, also, Rena performed the part of a little mother to Stella, assisting her to dress first, often incurring reproof herself, which by right should have been given to Stella. These children were not born in the land of the sunny South, where the negroes follow the steps of the white race as invariably as the shadow follows the sunshine. Aunt Debby's domestics, for she had servants, were hired to attend to the dairy, to spin and weave, not to wait on little children. She attended to everything herself; and it was a proverb, that Aunt Debby got more work for her money than any other woman in the parish. No sooner were they dressed, than these little mountain warriors of the elements ran out and washed their faces in the white, sparkling snow-drift, till the warm blood seemed to bubble in their cheeks, so rosy did they look. Their fingers would be cold and red for a while, but they tossed their arms over their breasts till the warmth circulated uniformly through their veins, and keen was the appetite that digested Aunt Debby's buckwheat cakes, muffins, and rolls.

CHAPTER IV.

“And thus at the collision of thy name
The vivid thought still flashes through my frame,
And for a moment all things as they were
Flit by me; they are gone—I am the same.” BYRON.

ONE evening (it was during the Christmas holidays, and all the boys and girls far and near were enjoying their winter vacation), there was a great gathering of the juvenile population, on the slope of the mountains behind Sunny Dell, to coast down hill, by the light of a moon, brighter than ever gilded an Italian landscape,—for the transcendant lustre of the moonbeams that are reflected by an expanse of unspotted snow, so white that no fuller on earth could whiten it, is such that the dazzled eye can scarcely bear the radiance. A slight rain had drizzled the preceding day, and glassed the surface of the snow, so that it shone, one wide sheet of glittering crystal. Rena and Stella sat perched on the seat of one of the back windows, gazing eagerly after the merry group that, hooded, capped, and cloaked, went laughing up the ascent, tugging the sleds after them.

“Oh! how I wish we could go too!” said Rena, her warm breath turning to frost on the glass against which her face was pressed.

“I wish so, too,” cried Stella; “we might go,—we ought to,—for there are girls littler than we there.”

Hannah, the ruddy, good-natured dairy-maid, offered to go with them and take care of them, if Aunt Debby would once break through her fixed rule, and let them go abroad after

sundown. It was hard to resist the pleading eyes of Rena, when they had that velvet look they sometimes wore, and permission was unexpectedly granted. Out in the moonshine—up on the hill-side—it was the work of a moment. Hannah held them tight,—one in each hand, two little bundles of woollen and fur; but she might as well have attempted to stay the arrow when shooting from the bow, as to keep Rena still when in the midst of the exciting scene. A stranger to most of the children, she was consequently an object of curiosity, and they gathered round her to the neglect of little Star-eyes, as Stella was often called. This was not pleasing to the young beauty, accustomed as she was to be the cynosure of juvenile admiration; but it was nothing to the mortification she endured when Sherwood Lindsey, the most aristocratic boy in town, the son of the Hon. Mr. Lindsey, the celebrated lawyer,—the tallest, handsomest boy of the party, took Rena under his especial patronage, made her promise to ride in his sled, and none other, the whole evening, leaving *her* to the more plebeian throng.

The germs of envy and jealousy, which in after years expanded into such rank luxuriance, were planted that night in the bosom of Stella; and several of the actors in this cold, bright, wintry scene, looked back to it, as the commencement of a dream involving the most important and thrilling events of their life.

Those, who have never witnessed the winter glories of the North, can have no conception of the magnificence that sometimes clothes the landscape. Winter has its gala days and nights, when she arrays herself in diamonds that put to shame the jewelry of royalty. The rain which had fallen, freezing as it fell, had hung every tree with ten thousand glittering icicles, on which the moon shone with a radiance so intense, they resembled the crystalline drops swinging from a silver chandelier. Bright and sparkling as the icicles and almost as

cold, the children sported over the white, shining snow, becoming more and more exhilarated, by exercise in the keen, bracing air.

Sherwood Lindsey's sled was the finest and lightest of the whole, and it was considered a great distinction to be invited to a seat in it. It was covered with a buffalo skin, and he had a string of bells on his neck, which he jingled with all his might. Placing Rena on the middle of the buffalo, and wrapping it carefully round her, he jumped up in front, and giving a loud hurrah, started off, a long train of sleds following in quick succession. Swifter and swifter the train went on, with constantly accelerating motion, till they stopped on the level snow, where most of them contrived to tumble out into a drift, making many a somerset in the cold, soft bed. To toil up again, with panting breath, that curled before them a silver wreath in the moon-light, was the work of a moment,—when again they darted down with lightning velocity, while their merry shouts were echoed by the mountain side, far over the precincts of Sunny Dell. Rena never was so wild, so full of superabundant mirth. At first she felt a little shy of the strange boy who had taken her captive, and did not like to be separated from Stella, but she soon became so excited by the amusement, and so charmed by her new acquaintance, that she forgot everything else. They were already on the most confidential terms. He had informed her who he was, who his father was, what academy he was attending, how soon he expected to be able to enter college, and that he intended to be a lawyer, and a very distinguished man. Rena had no idea of a confidence which was not reciprocal, and she told him in return, all about her father and mother, and her brother Henry, of her being lost in the hay-mow, of the red-headed man being lost in the ash-hole (for the anecdote had been repeated to her), and then she told him how funny she thought Aunt Debby looked when she first saw her, with her hair sticking up straight

all over her head. Sherwood laughed very heartily at this, and shook his bells, as if he could not make noise enough any other way, to express his mirth.

"But she is very good," added Rena, with feelings of compunction that she had involuntarily exposed her aunt to ridicule; "and I love her very much now."

"That is more than I do," exclaimed Sherwood.

"What's the reason you don't like her?"

"No matter. Father does not like me to say anything about her. Our families don't visit. I am sorry for it now."

"So am I," cried Rena mournfully; "I wanted you to come and see me. But you are a big boy, and perhaps you wouldn't come if your father would let you."

"Yes, I know I am big," said Sherwood, pulling up his dark fur collar round his glowing cheeks, with an air of manly pride; "I am almost thirteen."

"Oh dear!" exclaimed Rena, ready to cry with vexation at her own juvenility, "and I am only six—in my seventh year. How very old you are, and how kind you are to talk to me, who am so much younger!"

"You are a dear, sweet little soul, and I love you dearly. I wish you had any other aunt, than Aunt Debby, but that is no fault of yours."

"Don't you think Stella the prettiest little girl you ever saw?" asked Rena, with a true womanly curiosity to know the opinion of her young admirer.

"No, I like your looks a great deal better. She is too lili fied, too pinkified to suit me. She looks like some of these pieces of wax-work, I have seen at shows. Besides, I don't like her, she's proud, and poor folks have no business to be proud."

Rena was about to ask him if he were rich, when he was summoned by his companions to head the coasting train once more

"I'm tired of coasting," said he, carelessly—"who's for skating?"

"I"—and "I"—repeated a dozen boyish voices, and the sleds were simultaneously abandoned. They had all come prepared for this amusement also, and their skates were dangling among the diamonds of the adjacent trees. The stream which wound around Sunny Dell often overflowed its banks in winter, and covering the lawn soon hardened into ice, as the freezing blasts swept over it. Around the mill, where the current was deepest and strongest, the water still dashed over the rocks, and made dark pools, where all the shadows seemed to gather and blacken.

"Rena, you keep tight hold of my hand while I am skating," said Sherwood, "and I will carry you over the ice swifter than a bird skims the air."

"You must keep away from the mill then," said Hannah, anxious for the safety of her young charge; "there are deep holes there, and if you get in you'll surely be drowned."

"I know it, but who's fool enough to go near them when there's an ocean of hard ice right before him? Here, take the young lady's tippet and hang it on a tree, and her muff too. Good heavens! it is big enough for her to crawl in; she can't slide with such a heavy weight upon her."

In vain Hannah protested she would take cold. Rena *would* have them off, since Sherwood thought they were too heavy for her, and she was so warm and glowing from exercise she really felt uncomfortable with them. The long, dark tippet was tossed upon an icy bough, where it coiled an extemporaneous serpent; and the huge muff perched upon another branch, might have passed for a bear crouching before it. Stella was tired and wanted to go home, for the sight of Rena clinging to the hand of Sherwood Lindsey marred all her enjoyment. It was in vain the other boys contended for

her hand, since the lord of the party devoted himself exclusively to another.

Slowly and carefully, at first, did the young knight glide along, with the little lady holding tightly to his left hand, scarcely touching the ice with her feet. But in a short time, excited by the sport, and by the music of his own bells, that still rung merrily round his neck, he caught Rena up on his shoulder and darted off with triumphant speed. Now to the right—now to the left, in a graceful curve, with motion as uniform and untiring as the pinions of a sky-lark; then straight forward, with one arm folded on his breast, the other poising the dauntless little girl in the air, onward he flew, with no apparent volition of his own, but as if impelled by some irresistible, invisible power.

Rena clapped her hands and laughed wildly, and looked back in triumph on the pursuers, who tried in vain to keep up with their dazzling speed.

“Take care, Master Sherwood, take care, you are going too near the mill!” called Hannah, who had been, good-naturedly, sliding about by herself to keep warm. “Take care!” ejaculated she, in a louder tone. “Mercy on me, he can’t stop!”

At this moment a terrible scream went up, high above the mountain. The icy plain gradually descended towards the mill, from the spot where Sherwood was skating when Hannah called. He had been going with such accelerating velocity, unaware that he was approaching an inclined plane, that he could not arrest his course. A small, dark pool was right before him; he did not see it till just on its brink; one moment he was shooting like a meteor before the eye, the next he was gone—plunging down the abyss. But as he felt himself going, helplessly, irresistibly, the one thought, to save the little girl whose life he had endangered, struggled with his doom. He cast her from him just in time for her to find a frozen bed on the verge of the chasm, into which he was madly

precipitated. Hannah ran, breathless with terror, to snatch Rena from her perilous situation. As she stooped down she saw the boy rise above the water and catch hold of the ice that hung jagged round the edge of the chasm.

“Hold on, hold on, Master Sherwood!” she cried; “don’t let go, I can save you!”

The tree, on which the long fur tippet of Rena was hanging, was not far off. It was astonishing how she could get it, without falling down on the smooth ice; but there are moments when some self-forgetting souls seem invested with supernatural powers, and this was one. When she again approached the opening, she saw with horror, the boy was gone. His benumbed hands had loosened from their hold, and he had once more sunk under the cold, dark waters. With a cry of despair, she called on his name, when again he rose and clutched desperately at the slippery edges above him.

“There!” cried Hannah, throwing down to him the dark coils of the fur, “catch it, pull hard at it—I’ll draw you out—I’m strong as a man—Hold on—Hold on—for your life! Blessed Lord! give him strength, and me too!”

The next moment the heroic girl lay panting on the ice, breathless and exhausted from the exertions she had made, and by her side was the lately drowning boy, whom she had rescued from an icy grave. And round them both was a group of children crying and wringing their hands, their wild sport changed instantaneously to heartrending grief. They could not realize that danger was over. They had just begun to *feel*, for at first they were paralyzed by terror. Nor was the danger entirely past, for Sherwood lay insensible on the ice, his face almost as white as the snow. Notwithstanding their loud cries, no one had come to their relief—they had been so boisterous in their merriment, at a little distance the change from joy to grief was not perceptible.

Hannah, who had recovered her breath and energy, rose,

and calling the largest boys to assist her, lifted Sherwood from the ice, and bore him in the direction of Aunt Debby's house. Rena, stunned by her fall, and half frozen, now the excitement which had warmed her was passed away, clung weeping to Hannah's skirts, gazing with anguish and dread on the pale face of her new friend.

Aunt Debby was sitting by a blazing fire, listening to the loud ticking of the old-fashioned clock behind the door,—that solemn, peculiar sound, the beating of the heart of Time. She felt, lonely, melancholy—her restless eyes were fixed on the illuminated hearth, while her spirit went back into the shadowy past and wandered amidst some of the faded visions of her youth. She was lost in so deep a revery, she did not at first notice the lumbering sound of many feet coming through the passage. But when the trampling came nearer, she started up in alarm, and, hurrying to the door, threw it wide open, so that the ruddy blaze from the chimney lighted up the cold, sad group slowly entering. The boys were nearly sinking under their burthen, and the stout arms of Hannah were beginning to wax heavy.

“What's the matter? Who's this? Is he drowned? Is he dead? Where's Rena? Where's Stella?” were the interrogatories of Aunt Debby, who, having ascertained by a glance the safety of the little girls, ran into her bed-room and brought blankets, which having warmed by the blazing hearth, she wrapped round the still insensible boy. Hannah was despatched into the kitchen for warm water, the best old Cogniac was brought from the closet, and every means resorted to, promptly and energetically, for the resuscitation of the youth, whose life-blood began to glow once more under the genial influence acting upon his frame.

“Poor boy!” murmured Aunt Debby, smoothing the moist, dark hair, that fell over his white forehead. “Pretty boy! what a pity, if he had been drowned! He is no labourer's

son," continued she, rubbing with gentle friction the fair, slender fingers, that grew warm in her clasp.

The black eyes of Aunt Debby sparkled with delight when, lifting his heavy lids, he gazed earnestly in her face. There was something in that look, however, which seemed to trouble her, and the expression of her countenance changed.

"Who are you?" cried she, drawing back and dropping the hand she had been so gently chafing. "Whose son are you?"

"My name is Sherwood Lindsey, my father is the Hon. Mr. Lindsey of Bellevue," replied the aristocratic boy, raising himself on his elbow and looking haughtily in her face. The next moment his tone changed. He seemed conscious of the want of gratitude his manner evinced, and a bright flush reddened his cheek.

"You have been very kind, and I thank you," said he; "and father will thank you too."

"Sorry am I," cried she, her eyes flashing, her lips quivering with passion, "sorry am I, that your father's son ever darkened doors of mine. Little thought I when I was warming you into life, on my own bosom, that it was the son of my worst enemy, lying under my roof—Hon. Mr. Lindsey!—Honourable Viper!"

"Stop—I won't hear my father called such names; if you were not a woman I'd knock you down!" cried Sherwood, springing up and dashing the blankets on the floor. The brandy they had poured down his throat so copiously, now burned in his veins and added fire to his naturally high passions. "Where's my hat and cloak? I'll not stay another moment where my father is insulted!"

"Go, then, hot-brained son of a cold, selfish father!" exclaimed Aunt Debby, throwing the door wide open for him to pass; "go and tell him that I, Deborah Fay, breathed the warmth of my own heart into your frozen limbs. Hear what

he will say to that. But no—" she added, with a sudden revulsion of feeling, "you shall not go. Come back, and I will send you home; you must not walk—you will get cold, sick. Hannah, shut the door, and keep him from going."

Sherwood struggled in her grasp, but when Hannah laid her hand on his arm, the memory of her generous efforts in his behalf, the thought that he owed his life to her, arrested him. "Brave girl—good girl!" cried he, pressing gratefully that strong hand in both his own. "If it had not been for you I should have perished. Father will reward you, for he is *not* a cold, selfish man. And I, if I should live to the age of Methuselah, will remember what you have done for me to-night. And you, you dear little warm-hearted creature," exclaimed the boy, snatching Rena, who, trembling and frightened, kept close to Hannah's side, in his arms, and kissing her a half-dozen times, "good-bye; I'm glad I haven't your precious life to answer for. I shall see you again, in spite of all the Aunt Debbys in the world!"

Putting her gently on the floor, he sprang through the door, slammed it after him, ran through the passage, leaped across the threshold, flew over the frozen lawn, and was out of sight in a moment. The other children, cold and weary, more slowly followed. Hannah, after giving the sheets a hot, sugar warming, deposited Rena and Stella in bed. Aunt Debby sat down alone, by the hearth-side, and there she sat for hours, gazing at the wood as it burned into brands, falling with blackened ends from the andirons, at the brands till they turned into glowing coals, and then she watched the coals as they were slowly converted into embers, the gray, ashy hue stealing over their ruddiness, till nothing but coldness and desolation remained, where all had been warmth and brilliancy. But her thoughts were far away from the lonely hearth. The sight of that boy, looking at her so steadfastly with those dark, expressive eyes, so like his father's, had penetrated the icy

crust which covered the waters of memory, and the current rolled coldly and darkly along.

It rolled colder and darker, till, overwhelmed by its waves, she bent her head forward till it rested on her knees, and tears, bitter and passionate, gushed from her eyes.

Oh! how many such tears gush forth in secret, which the world knows not of! How many, who are deemed cold and unfeeling, and harsh and selfish, thus in solitude and darkness give vent to the anguish of a wounded heart, and mourn with unavailing regret over their blighted hopes, withered affections, and embittered feelings!

Who, that saw Aunt Debby the next morning, bustling about the house, directing Hannah how to skim the milk and scald the churn, and Peter how to feed the cattle and the swine, her quick eyes seeing and controlling everything, would have recognised the passionate woman, who sat weeping by the lonely hearth-stone?

CHAPTER V.

“I saw her once—so freshly fair,
That, like a blossom just unfolding,
She opened to life’s cloudless air ;
And Nature joyed to view its moulding.
Oh ! who could look on such a form,
So *heavenly fair*, so softly tender,
And darkly dream, that earthly *sin*
Should dim such sweet, delicious splendour !”

A MESSENGER from Mr. Lindsey ! Aunt Debby’s face reddened, but she did not dash the packet into the man’s face, as Hannah feared she would. She opened it, and found a note to herself, and a folded paper directed to Hannah. The note expressed, in a polite but constrained manner, his gratitude for her kindness to his son, and his hope that he might be permitted to cancel the obligations she had imposed upon him. The envelope to Hannah contained a hundred dollar bill, accompanied by some gentlemanly expressions of gratitude and esteem. Aunt Debby’s eyes flashed fire as she perused the note. It seemed that all the worst passions of her nature were roused by contact with any of the inmates of Bellevue.

“Tell Mr. Lindsey—the *Hon.* Mr. Lindsey,” said she, emphasizing the title with ironical force, “that he owes no gratitude to me. I did no more for his son than I would for a drowning puppy or a freezing calf. Tell him this—and tell him what Hannah says, too. I know she scorns his money, or she is not the girl I take her to be.”

But Hannah did not scorn the money. She was a hard-

working servant girl, whose weekly wages were divided with an infirm and widowed mother. So large a sum had never been in her possession before, and visions of luxury for herself and mother, of fine dresses, and admiring eyes, swam before the young and ruddy dairy-maid. It would be so grand to go to the stores and ask the clerks to change her hundred dollar bill, to have it in bright, hard specie, which would chink and make music in her ears! She looked at the bill, at Aunt Debby, whose eyes were severely scanning her honest and ingenuous countenance, at the good-looking young man who was waiting for her reply, and then at little Rena, who was gazing eagerly in her face. There was something in the expression of Rena's earnest eyes that induced Hannah to say—

“What would you do, Miss Rena, if you were in my place?”

“I wouldn't be paid for being good,” whispered the child, “if it was me.”

“Nor I, either!” cried Hannah, the independent spirit of our country's yeomanry triumphing over the temptation. “Tell Mr. Lindsey,” added she, turning to the young man, and handing him the paper, while she imitated unconsciously the dignified tones of Aunt Debby, “that I'm just as much obliged to him as if I took his money, and I think it was very generous in him to offer it. But I didn't do anything to be paid for. I could not stand by and see anybody drowned, when I thought of a way to save them. It didn't cost me anything but a hard pull, and my arms are strong enough for that.”

The look of profound and respectful admiration with which the young man regarded the disinterested dairy-maid was not unperceived by its object. It was probably a richer reward than the hundred dollars would have been. Light was her heart, and buoyant her steps, as she resumed her daily duties,

and she sung so long and loud while plying the churn-dash, and working over the butter, that Aunt Debby, who had no particular love for music of any kind, was driven in despair to a distant part of the house. She did not like to reprove her bursts of melody, as she was pleased with her act of self-renunciation. From this time she raised her wages, and added to the presents she was in the habit of sending her invalid mother. Hannah felt her domestic position elevated, and feeling more self-respect, fulfilled her duties, not with more fidelity, that was not possible, but with more cheerfulness. She put more *heart* into her services, and *love* makes every burden light.

It was surprising how often she met the young man who brought Mr. Lindsey's note, as the families of Sunny Dell and Bellevue had nothing to do with each other. At first he passed her with a low bow, and an admiring glance, then he ventured to assist her over a muddy place by the way-side, and at length, emboldened by her smiles and blushes, accompanied her from church, as far as the mill-dam. After that Hannah discovered (it certainly was a mysterious process of the understanding, by which she arrived at this conclusion) that it was the most convenient way to bring round her brimming milk-pails by the dam, though she encountered a stone wall and a five rail fence; but Jimmy Bell so often *happened* to be there, it was quite a pleasant circumstance. He dared not encounter the flashing eyes of Aunt Debby, whom he looked upon as the Cerberus of Sunny Dell. Not that he knew anything of Cerberus, but he was well acquainted with mastiffs and watch-dogs with one head, and he would much rather encounter all their terrors, than one glance of Aunt Debby's keen black eyes. So he wooed the ruddy milk-maid by the side of the mill-dam, where the snow lay in drifts against the rocks, and the dashing waters left icicles, where its foam had whitened and heaved. It was a cold place, but love warmed their hearts and took

away the winter's chill; and they talked of the time when they should have a nice little cottage and farm of their own, when Hannah would milk their own cows, and make their own butter and cheese.

Poor little Rena began to be homesick. She loved Aunt Debby and Hannah, and Stella too, though Stella never seemed to love *her* as well since the night Sherwood Lindsey made her the queen of the juvenile party. But she was tired of the monotony of her life. She was tired of knitting and sewing, and reading mechanically. She wanted to be with her pale, pretty mother, her gentle brother, and to nestle once more in her father's caressing arms. When once this feeling got possession of her, it grew into actual sickness. She could not eat, nor sleep, and her rosy, healthy, sunny face assumed a wan, wistful look, that grieved Aunt Debby very much, for she loved the child, and would gladly have adopted her as her own. She wrote, however, to her brother to come for Rena, on condition that when the child was a little older, she should return again to Sunny Dell.

It is not to be supposed that Rena had no curiosity with regard to her aunt's enmity towards the Lindsey family, or that she had forgotten the friend towards whom she was so strongly attracted. She had interrogated her aunt, who told her it was no business of hers, that little girls had one tongue and two ears, so that they could listen twice and speak once. She had asked Hannah, who answered that she did not know; she believed it commenced in politics, before Mr. Wright died, and that Mr. Lindsey had started a lawsuit against Mr. Wright, and that it was still going on, and that Aunt Debby declared she would never pay a cent, if all the judges in the United States decided against her. Sherwood had been absent at school since he was a very small boy, which was the reason he was not recognised when brought in by the heroic Hannah, into her mistress's house.

One day, in the early spring, just before her return home, Rena was riding with her aunt, in her family chaise. The roads were exceedingly bad, as they always are in northern latitudes, after the breaking up of winter. It was a one horse chaise, and Aunt Debby drove her gray roan herself, in all the glory of independence. Her green bonnet was put farther back than usual, so that she could see better how to select the best part of the road; and as she held the reins in both hands, somewhat separated, with her profile considerably elevated, Rena could not help thinking again, how funny Aunt Debby looked, and she burst into a sudden fit of laughter. Fortunately for her, there came along at that moment a handsome carriage, drawn by a span of coal-black horses, which seemed to disdain the mud that hung to their white fetlocks.

“Look, aunt, look!” said the delighted Rena; “there’s Jimmy Bell driving that pretty carriage! And look, aunt, what a pretty lady! what a fine gentleman!—he’s bowing to you, aunt. Who is it?”

“Hush, hush!” cried her aunt, giving her whip a tremendous flourish over the head of the horse, which almost stopped while the carriage was rolling by. The lady who sat leaning back, wrapped up in India shawls, was very beautiful, and the gentleman, who bowed to Aunt Debby, had a dark and very striking countenance.

“Who is it?” responded Rena—“Is it Mr. Lindsey?”

“Yes, it is the Hon. Mr. Lindsey, and the Hon. Mrs. Lindsey,” replied Aunt Debby in a tone of bitterness, giving her horse another flourish about the ears.

Rena wished Sherwood had been with them, and wondered if she should ever see him again, and when he was as old, if he would look as grand as his father, and ride in as fine a carriage, drawn by shining black horses. But when she returned to Sunny Dell, she forgot all about Sherwood Lindsey and dreams of the future, for her own dear father stood at the

door to greet her, tall, erect, and handsome as ever, with the same loving smile! With one bound she cleared the chaise, and was hanging round his neck, crying and sobbing, and hugging and kissing him, as he never had been kissed before. She was not satisfied with kissing his face a thousand times; she took his hands, hardened by honourable labour, but pure from all evil-doing, and pressed first one and then the other to her lips and heart, with truly oriental grace of action.

“You’ve spoiled her, brother;” said Aunt Debby, her eyes glistening in spite of herself. “You should not do it. It is dangerous to cultivate the affections too highly. That child must go through a hardening process, or she will be wretched.”

“Poor philosophy, sister Debby,” answered Col. Fay; “the heart hardens fast enough of itself, without making use of any artificial measures. I have never yet seen too much heart in this world. I would as soon take a cake of ice and put it on her head to keep it from growing, as try to repress the love that gushes out to meet mine. I have found the only true happiness of life, in the exercise of the affections—and I thank my Maker, that he has given me, and my little girl too, a warm heart.”

“It may be a blessing for a man, but a curse to woman,” replied Aunt Debby, shaking her head.

“But who is *this* little lady?” asked the Colonel, turning to Stella, who stood in the back-ground, looking inquisitively at the strange gentleman; “who is this beautiful child?”

“This is Stella,” cried Rena, running and leading her to her father, with a patronizing air. “Haven’t you heard of Stella? She is my playmate, and I love her. And hasn’t she got pretty hair?” and Rena tried to smooth down the ripples of gold with her caressing hand.

Col. Fay was very fond of children. He took them on each knee and looked from one to the other; then his eyes rested

on the extraordinary beauty of Stella with manifest admiration

“Don't you wish I was as pretty as Stella, papa?” whispered Rena, interpreting his thoughts.

“It is the heart and the mind that gives beauty to the face, my child, and while you keep the one pure and the other bright, you will look pretty enough.”

Stella had so often heard it remarked by strangers, that she was beautiful, that it excited no surprise. She considered the praise of beauty her inalienable right, and heard her praises as a matter of course. They never seemed to elate her. The purple iris of her deep blue eyes never dilated with rapture, when she heard them compared to the stars in lustre; but vanity was growing rankly, a barren weed, in her heart, absorbing all the strength of the soil, and shading and darkening every better feeling. Deceit too and envy were there, waiting only for sunshine and opportunity to develop their growth. Admiration was already become necessary to her happiness, and she was restless and miserable when there was no one near to admire and to praise. Rena, in her unenvying artlessness, was always telling her how sweet and pretty she was, and therefore she loved to have Rena with her, and smiled upon and caressed her; but let their interests clash, let her for one moment be shaded by Rena's engaging qualities, she felt that she was wronged, outraged, and then she actually hated her confiding little friend.

An incident which occurred the morning of Rena's departure illustrates one of Stella's qualities.

Aunt Debby had filled a bag with cakes and apples for the accommodation of the travellers, and a nice little covered basket, with the choicest kind of golden pippins, for Mrs. Fay. It was the season of the year when apples were getting very scarce, and she knew they would be considered a great luxury by an invalid. The bag and basket were deposited on the top

of Rena's trunk, the night before, to be ready for the early morning ride. When the articles were brought into the breakfast room, Aunt Debby thought she would give one more look at her pet apples, and secure the cover a little more carefully. To her astonishment, the basket was more than half empty.

"Rena," said she, sharply, "have you been eating your mother's apples, when I've given you so many of your own?"

"No, ma'am, I wouldn't think of such a thing," answered Rena, blushing painfully at the imputation.

"Then it must have been you, Stella," said Aunt Debby, looking keenly into her eyes.

"I never touched one, I'm sure, ma'am," replied Stella, appearing as calm and as sweet as a little angel. Again the keen black eyes turned to the blushing Rena, who, oppressed by the scrutiny, and the consciousness that she was an object of suspicion, burst into tears. Col. Fay was troubled; he knew a child might be tempted into falsehood to shield itself from blame, and he did not think Rena infallible; but the selfish greediness that prompted the act, was so foreign to her reckless, generous nature, he did not believe her to be the culprit.

"Some one *must* have taken them," repeated Aunt Debby; "they did not walk out of the basket without help. I don't mind the apples, but I do despise greediness and falsehood. Rena, I'm sorry for it, but I know you *did* take them, they were right by your bed-side."

"I never, never did," cried the child, passionate indignation drying up her tears; then seizing the basket and turning it upside down, letting all the remaining apples roll on the floor, "I don't want the old apples!" she cried; "Mama shan't have one of them! they would choke her, I know!"

"Rena, Rena!" cried her father, fixing upon her one of those calm, upbraiding looks, which always had such power

over her. She was too much excited now to be subdued at once. She had loved her aunt so much just before; she was so softened by the recollection of all her kindness, forgetting everything that was harsh and forbidding, on the eve of being separated from her, that the injustice of the accusation caused a bitter, smarting sense of wrong. Stella, stooping down, calmly picked up the apples, putting them into the basket, with a sweet tranquillity of manner that appeared much more amiable than Rena's passionate excitement. Col. Fay thought so, as he looked down upon her and then upon his own child; and he was grieved that such a cloud should rest upon the parting hour.

"Here," cried Hannah, entering at this moment with her hands full of golden pippins, an exulting expression on her countenance; "I found them at the bottom of Stella's little trunk, right under all her clothes."

"You didn't," exclaimed Stella, springing up and confronting Hannah; "I didn't put them there; you've no business in my trunk."

"Yes, but I have though, when the truth is to be found out. I knew from the first who had them, and was determined to root the matter to the bottom."

"How did you know, Hannah?" asked Aunt Debby, thankful that Stella and not Rena was the offender.

"Because I've known *her* take fruit and cake before and hide it, and Miss Rena never did such a thing in her life; *she* is not a thief nor a liar." The vain little charity girl was no favourite with the honest dairy-maid.

"Go up stairs, Stella," said Aunt Debby; "go into your room; shut the door, and stay there till I call you. Rena, you must not speak to her; I forbid it."

Rena, since her own character was cleared from suspicion, felt deeply the disgrace of her companion. Her judgment condemned, but her heart pitied her. She grieved for the

violence she had displayed, and implored Aunt Debby's forgiveness for herself and Stella too.

"I am ashamed," said her aunt, "that I could have believed my brother's child guilty of such meanness. The Fays may have their faults, but they never were a mean race. Stella came from a different stock. The dregs stick to her."

"Did you know her parents?" asked her brother.

"I saw her mother at the almshouse a short time before her death. She was very young, and even then exceedingly beautiful. You can judge of her beauty by the little girl, who is her exact miniature. She never revealed the name of Stella's father, though she said he was still living. He must be an unprincipled man, and I am afraid Stella resembles him in character."

"But, sister Debby, deal gently with that erring child. Convince her, that while you hate the offence, you can still love the offender. I am sorry to see such coolness of deception in one so very young. But do not cast her from you, for this, perhaps, her first transgression. Many a hardened criminal might have been redeemed, if their first faults had been met with gentleness and mercy, instead of severity."

"Well—I will not be too harsh with her, though she deserves a severe punishment. But of one thing be assured; when Rena returns, as you have promised she one day shall, I shall be careful about her being domesticated with Stella."

Well was it for Stella, that so kind and excellent a man as Col. Fay pleaded in her behalf, and well was it for Rena, that she had a father so affectionate, so intelligent, and judicious, to watch over her wayward childhood. Pleasant was her homeward journey, and many a sweet lesson of love and wisdom was breathed into her ear, while she was borne rapidly back to scenes made a thousand times dearer by absence.

CHAPTER VI.

“She was a phantom of delight,
When first she gleamed upon my sight,—
A lovely apparition, sent
To be a moment’s ornament;
Her eyes as stars of twilight fair,
Like twilight’s too her dusky hair;
But all things else about her, drawn
From May-time and the cheerful dawn—
A dancing shape—an image gay,
To haunt, to startle, and waylay.”

WORDSWORTH.

IF we thought the reader felt half the interest in our little Rena, that we do ourself, we would linger still longer on the eastern horizon of her existence, which, though sometimes darkened by the clouds of passion, usually sparkled with that rosy light, never seen, save in life’s dewy morn. We cannot bear that she should grow older, fearing that she may lose some of the freshness and brightness and unselfishness of her character. We do not want her to go to school, to come in contact with rude and perhaps unprincipled children, to be whirled about in the vortex of young, boiling passions. We do not even wish her to visit Aunt Debby again, while Star-eyes is there, or *Golden Pippin*, as Hannah loved to call her after the abduction of the apples.

But Rena, with strange perverseness, *will* grow older, *will* go to school, and even visit Sunny Dell, when Aunt Debby comes expressly for her. In ancient times, and even now in some eastern countries, there is a belief in the power of talismans to avert evil from those who bear them in their bosoms.

In our own country and neighbourhood, we witness daily proofs of this superstition—babies with little aromatic and pungent-smelling bags suspended from their innocent necks, to act as counter-charms to the malignant influence of the measles, scarlet fever, and whooping cough, those immemorial and deadly foes to childhood. Rena must have had some such hidden talisman, to preserve her from the influence of evil example, and the hardening effect of that worldly wisdom, which children too precociously acquire.

She did not attend a fashionable boarding school, which would carry her away from her simple country home, but the Academy in her own town, which was taught by a profound classical scholar. It was an institution that included children of both sexes, but they studied in different apartments, meeting only at the recitation hours, under the watchful eye of their literary guardian. Henry, though two years older than his sister, was in the same class, and far behind her in scholastic attainments. This was a source of great pain and mortification to her, and she often allowed questions to pass her, in seeming ignorance, rather than take precedence of her brother. Indeed he was a source of trouble to her in many ways, for though generally gentle and forbearing when injuries were inflicted on herself, her spirit flashed high, when they approached the objects of her love. Mrs. Fay, who still made Henry's feminine beauty her pride and delight, took most injudicious pains with his dress and appearance. She continued to smooth and curl his long, black hair, ruffled and plaited his fine shirt collars, while Rena's dress was comparatively neglected. The boys called him little dandy, and girl-boy, and loved to put burrs in his curls, and ink-spots on his collars, which he dared not resent himself, but which often exasperated the high-spirited Rena. If Henry had not been her own brother she would probably have despised his dandyism and cowardice, and in her juvenile wildness have manifested her feelings in mischievous

ridicule; but he was such a quiet, good boy at home, and so idolized by his mother, so pretty and genteel, she felt he ought to be sacred from vulgar teasings, and determined he should be.

She was a universal favourite herself. When assembled at play-hours on the green in front of the Academy, under the shade of a large elm, the trysting-spot of all their sports, Rena was called upon to decide what amusement they should engage in, and appointed to all places of honour and distinction. If it was "Queen Ann who sits in the sun," she was made to personate her royal highness, who by a wonderful chemical secret, is at the same time as "fair as a lily and as brown as a bun." If it was the time-honoured play of "I'm on Titmouse's land, and Titmouse can't catch me," she was sure to be chosen the great Titmouse himself, and placed in triumph in the centre of the green. If the martial game of Prisoner's Bass was the amusement of the hour, Rena was claimed with eager contention by both parties, for she was the swiftest runner, the most dauntless rescuer, and the most successful eloper of the whole band. She resolved to give up all this pre-eminence for Henry's sake. When the play-hour came, instead of leading off the merry train, she took Henry's hand and went with him to the woods to gather wild flowers, or sat down with him in the Academy and assisted him in getting his lessons.

"Rena, come and play with us; there's no fun without you; we cannot get along without you," was the cry of all the boys and girls.

"No, I don't want to play with you any more, you've bad hearts, and I don't love you. You tease Henry and make him unhappy, and he never did anything to hurt you. I don't want you to love me, unless you love him too."

"We will love him, we won't tease him," was the vociferous promise of all, and Rena, with trusting faith, once more threw herself wildly into their sports.

At first they were rather too officious in their manifestations

of good-will to Henry, painfully reminding him of all he had endured, while they proclaimed the cessation of hostilities.

“Come here, Henry, and play with me—I won’t stick burrs in your hair—I won’t spatter ink on your nice ruffled collar—I won’t trip you down in running and make your nose bleed!” They might have omitted all this, and they did gradually cease all kind of torment, leaving the boy safe behind the shielding influence of a sister’s love and courage.

Poor Henry! his father was so anxious that he should be a fine scholar, pass through College with distinction, and become distinguished in some of the learned professions! It was a weakness of Col. Fay, the only one he had,—this extreme desire for his son to become a professional man,—a *learned* professional man,—for the word *profession* is now applied indiscriminately to every occupation. He gloried in his own, and would not have exchanged his independent mode of existence for any other. Though a man of remarkable intelligence and clearness of mind, and extensive reading, he had never enjoyed the advantages of a liberal education, and was in consequence more solicitous to secure them for his son. Ah! if Rena had only been a boy, what a scholar she would have made! What eloquence, what energy, what ambition would have been hers! Col. Fay could not help thinking these thoughts sometimes; but what would he have done without his affectionate, caressing girl, whose intelligent sympathy, idolizing affection, and exuberant gayety were the joy and sunshine of his life? He would not have changed her into a boy for all the world!

Mrs. Fay still scolded “that child” for her romping disposition, and tried to convince her that she was getting too old to ride on the hay-cart, or to play with snow-balls and slide on the ice in the winter. But “that child” of sunshine and free air could not exist out of her native elements. When she returned from school, she loved to get her darling old straw-hat, and

ramble with her father about the beautiful farm ; and in the hay-making season, she had a rake of her own, with which she flew about among the mown grass and scattered it over the heads of the hay-makers. To the horror of her mother, but with the permission of her father, she even learned to skate, and no bird on the wing could excel her in velocity, or ease of motion.

"My dear," said Mrs. Fay to her husband, in her soft, complaining voice, and inhaling as usual the odour of camphor, "I do wish you would not encourage Rena in her boyish ways. I am afraid I never can make a lady of her. You don't think how old she is growing. She is twelve years old already."

"You surely don't want her to give up childish exercises now and think herself a woman, do you? For my part, I think the fine, vigorous constitution she is acquiring is worth all the fine lady-graces in the world. Rena never was sick a day in her life."

"I did not think you would reproach me in that way," said his wife, faintly, applying the saturated handkerchief to her head. "I'm sure it is not my fault that I am so delicate, if it is a fault. But I really think a female more interesting who is *rather* feeble, than one who is too strong and robust."

"You know I meant no reproach to you, Fanny—I am incapable of that. But in the name of all that's rational, let me ask you, if you really would prefer that your child should be a weak, helpless invalid, *looking interesting*, rather than a healthy, happy, and useful woman?"

"I'm sure I'm not helpless, if I am weak," murmured Mrs. Fay. "I do a great deal of sewing, when most women would lie in bed and do nothing. If any one knew what I suffer in my head, and heart, and back, they would be astonished that I could sit up one moment. I've tried every kind of

medicine I ever heard of, and it does me no good. Oh! my poor head! Don't talk so loud the next time you speak; pray don't."

Though Col. Fay had heard the same complaint ten thousand times ten thousand, he was too kind and compassionate to turn away with a deaf ear. He brought the camphor bottle, and moistening anew the linen that bound her forehead, smoothed, with a caressing motion, the soft brown hair that was parted on her brow. He was scarcely conscious how Mrs. Fay's infirmities were growing upon her, in consequence of his indulgence; how she gloried more and more in the character of an invalid, and how her soft voice was gradually attenuating itself into a kind of whisper, till one could scarcely hear her speak across the room. He was accustomed to all this, and never dreamed of any other state of things as it regarded her, but he was not weak enough to allow her to influence him in the education of his daughter, so as to deprive her of the glorious prerogative of health. He was even so devoid of taste as to think she would be more *interesting* with rosy cheeks, elastic limbs, and bounding steps, than with pallid complexion, feeble movements, and languid voice. He regretted exceedingly that he had not exercised a father's authority over Henry, and forced him from the still life he loved too well. If he had begun with him earlier he might have made a man of him; now, he had many misgivings.

The village near which Col. Fay's farm was situated, was only a division of a large and beautiful town, not thickly settled, but containing many elegant residences and wealthy inhabitants. It had none of the temptations, and many of the refinements, of city life, and was thought a very desirable place for young gentlemen to prepare for the university, or for rusticated students to be banished when they had violated the majesty of the laws. This circumstance greatly enlivened the quietude of the place, especially in the winter season, when

the ground was covered with snow, and the air rung from morning till night with the silvery sound of bells, mingled with the gay laugh of childhood and youth.

Rena was too young to be invited to the parties with which these wild youth were often honoured, so their coming and going did not affect her in the least. She sometimes met them as they went dashing along, with half-a-dozen strings of bells on their horses, but she always jumped into the snow by the way-side, however deep, to avoid coming in near contact with them. She was as shy as she was wild, and dreaded the sight of a stranger.

It was about this time, when Rena was twelve years old, and her passion for skating at its full height, that there never was such a smooth, magnificent sheet of ice as covered the meadow, back of Col. Fay's house. It was a retired spot, and chosen by Rena for her own skating ground, where Henry was never allowed to bring any intruding boys. A thick row of trees edged it on one side and formed a boundary between it and the river, that now also was covered with ice, which the boys and young men appropriated to their amusements. Rena went out with her father a night, as cold, and clear, and bright, as the one she so well remembered at Sunny Dell, when, mounted on the shoulder of Sherwood Lindsey, she was borne to the very brink of death. She had never seen him since, and that was six years ago ; but the impression made on her childish imagination was not obliterated. His ascendancy over the other boys, his boyish gallantry to herself, the danger he had incurred, his bold defiance of her aunt, in defence of an insulted father ; even his parting words to herself, " that he would see her again in spite of all the Aunt Debbys in the world," were treasured up in her memory. She had visited Aunt Debby since, but saw nothing of Sherwood. Then she heard he was in College, and she hoped when Henry

was old enough to enter, she might possibly learn something through him of her old friend.

Col. Fay was almost as fond of skating as his wild girl, and in youth excelled in every athletic exercise and amusement. Labour, however, had somewhat stiffened his joints, and he could not keep up with her Atalantean swiftness. She would fly before him, dart round him in concentric circles, then glide slowly away, gently as a bark on a placid stream.

“Take my bonnet, papa,” said she, tossing it on his arm. “It covers my face too much.”

“But your ears will freeze, my child. Mine tingle already.”

“Well, this will protect them,” cried she, laughing; and taking the scarlet woollen tippet from her neck, wound it round her head, in the form of a turban, beneath which her elf-locks sported in the wintry breeze. Rena was not beautiful, but there was something taking, wild, witch-like, bewitching about her. She thought she was ugly herself, because she had so often heard Henry’s beauty praised by her injudicious mother, in preference to her own. And then Stella so faultlessly beautiful—what was she in comparison to her? But little cared she about her looks, as long as she was an object of love to those around her. She never dreamed, when she twisted the scarlet band, with gipsy wildness, round her head, that she was doing anything that would decorate her face. She only did it to keep her ears warm, since her father feared they would tingle from the cold. But nothing could be more picturesque than her oriental costume; and, as she bowed a moment before her father, ere commencing again her arrowy flight, he could not help wishing some one was by, to see how charming she looked.

“I am going to the river a moment,” said he, “to see if Henry is there. You are not afraid to be left alone, a little while, Snowbird?”

“Afraid!” repeated Rena, laughing and kissing her hand

to him, as she flew away. "Afraid! oh, no." Rena was not afraid to be alone in the darkness of midnight—how then could she fear in that brilliant hour, when if she looked up to heaven, she saw the moon shining down upon her with such an angelic smile; if she looked below, she beheld the same moon looking up to her lovingly, radiantly, from the pure, glassy surface over which she was floating. Of what should *she* be afraid, with that talisman in her young bosom, more powerful than the amulets of the East? Fearlessly, gracefully she glided onward, keeping company with her own bright thoughts, the night beams quivering coldly on her brow. She heard the sound of some one skating behind her, and thought she would warm her father by giving him a race, so she darted off with fresh velocity. "Catch me if you can!" she cried, turning round partly, without slackening her speed. She thought he looked less tall and large than usual, but she was dazzled by the moonbeams reflected on the ice, her own speed, and the oblique position from which she beheld him. Onward she went, still the pursuer gained upon her. "How fast father skates!" thought she. "I never knew him fly so before. He is turning into a boy again." Laughing merrily at the idea of his rejuvenation, she again called, "Catch me if you can!" while the ice flashed and sparkled in diamonds beneath her glittering skates. But fast as her winged feet bore her, faster still came on the winged feet behind her. "Poor papa!" thought she. "He will be so tired to-morrow, and then I shall laugh at him so much." And, panting for breath, she felt herself fairly overtaken, for the arms of the pursuer were thrown around her, a musical laugh rang in her ears, and a pair of young, dark eyes, looked triumphantly into her own.

"Sprite, Gipsy, Snowbird," cried the conqueror, "I have caught you at last. And *this*, by all the rights of chivalry, is my reward." Then kissing with daring gallantry the red check, that glowed through the whiteness of the night, with a

hue almost as bright as the scarlet drapery that wreathed her head, he added, "By the memory of Sunny Dell, forgive me, Rena! You are still but a child, and I am so glad, so very glad to see you again."

Though Rena was but a child, she doubtless ought to have been angry at the boldness of the youth, whom by his voice and words she now recognised as Sherwood Lindsey. And had he thus greeted her in the public street, or by the quiet fireside, she would have resented it as too great a freedom. But there was such freedom around them—that sea of shining ice below, that sea of shining blue above, the exhilarating race they had just ended—and then the joy of seeing him again, so unexpectedly, so strangely!—if she forgot to be angry, let her be forgiven.

"I thought it was father," said she, after expressing her recognition and her gladness at the unlooked-for meeting, "or I should not have given such a challenge."

"I should like to see your father," answered Sherwood, laughing. "He must be a gay gentleman, if he can undertake to race with you. I am called the swiftest skater in College, and I was very near giving up the chase in despair."

"How came you to commence it?" said Rena. "Did you know me, or think I was some poor spirit that had lost its way?"

"I was told that I should find you here, when I went on the river to skate, and I could not resist the temptation of invading your boundaries. How little you are altered! I should have known you anywhere, especially if you looked up in my face once, with that nondescript pair of eyes. Why, what a brave, glorious girl you are, Rena! I would not give you now, for as many city belles as could dance on this broad ice. But you had forgotten me, forgotten all about that night, when we coasted and skated together at Sunny Dell, when I nearly broke your poor little head by throwing you on the

ice, and Aunt Debby thawed me with the lightning of her wrathful glances."

"Oh, no," replied Rena, "I never have forgotten that night. This very evening it came back upon me so freshly, so strongly, I must have felt you were near. Perhaps I should not have known *you*, had I met you in a crowd, for you have grown so tall, so manly." And the eyes of the wild skating girl looked up to the tall boy of eighteen years, with that velvet softness of expression, which he said he should have recognised all the world over.

"There is father," cried she, observing Col. Fay, emerging from the dark shadow of the trees that bounded the river. "Let us go and meet him. How could I have taken *you* for him?"

The Colonel looked with amazement, on seeing his young daughter, skating merrily towards him, hand in hand with a very distinguished-looking young man, whom he had never seen before, but who, from her bright, happy countenance, was no stranger to her.

"Papa, this is Sherwood Lindsey," cried she. There was something in the tone of her voice, which implied that everybody in the world ought to know who Sherwood Lindsey was.

"The son of the Hon. Mr. Lindsey?" asked Col. Fay, holding out his hand to the youth, but Rena felt that her father's manner was cold, compared to its usual hospitable warmth, and she grieved lest Sherwood should perceive it.

"Yes," replied Sherwood, with a bow of graceful respect. "Has my father the honour of knowing Col. Fay?"

"I knew your father when he was a young man," answered the Colonel, in a freezing tone. "We have never met since. I can hardly realize that he has so tall a son," he added, with more affability of tone.

"My father looks almost as young as I do," said Sherwood; "we have sometimes been taken for brothers."

"The resemblance in *person* is very striking," said Col.

Fay, keenly perusing the young man's face, on whose cheek a haughty flush was gathering. He could bear the flashing anger of Aunt Debby better than this cold politeness, for *that* he could resent. He thought it very strange that a man like Col. Fay, who looked as if he were superior to petty prejudices, should allow the political and legal differences between his father and Aunt Debby to affect his conduct towards his son.

"I wish I possessed my father's talents," said he, in answer to the last remark; "I could not have a better passport through the world."

"Talents without virtue are a poor inheritance. But I trust, young man, you are the possessor of both. Come, it is too cold for my girl to stand still here, when the air cuts like a razor. Will you walk home with us, and get warm by a farmer's blazing fire?"

Rena's eyes sparkled at seeing her father awakening to a sense of hospitality; but Sherwood declined the seat by the fireside, though he told Rena he would accompany her in her homeward walk. The path was narrow, cut through the snow and in many places covered with ice. Col. Fay walked on before, his tall form, wrapped in a dark cloak, serving not only as a guide, but a shelter from the keen wind. Sherwood held Rena's hand, to keep her from sliding down, though she told him she never had fallen. Sometimes her father would turn round to see if she were near, and Rena, fearful that Sherwood would be angry at his scrutiny, involuntarily drew closer to him, and confided herself more completely to his care. When they reached the gate fronting the house, Sherwood drew back and refused to enter.

He hesitated a moment, and then said, with a frankness that Rena admired, it was so congenial to her own nature—

"Col. Fay, I perceive very plainly, that you are prejudiced against me on my father's account. I know there is an ancient feud between him and Mrs. Wright, the full merits of which I never knew. Whatever they are, you cannot wish me to

think evil of my father, and I am sure my father's son is not to blame for events that may have occurred before his birth. I should like very much, sir, to take a seat by your fireside, but I must be sure of a welcome, and a cordial one, too, before I court its warmth."

"You are right, young man—you are right, and I was wrong to greet you coldly as I did. We are not always masters of our feelings; and I acknowledge your name called up some very unpleasant recollections. I like your frankness. Come in—you shall have a welcome, and a warm one, too, if the sparks that fly from the chimney do not give false evidence."

Thus invited, Sherwood no longer hesitated, but followed Rena into an apartment, which, though very different from his mother's elegant drawing-room, was very neatly and genteelly furnished, and presented an appearance of truly heart-cheering warmth. Generous was the fire that roared in the chimney, for Rachel had been watching for the return of the skaters, and piled on the logs, dry from a summer's housing. Henry was seated by the hearth, his hair as smooth and glossy as if the frosty breath of night had never blown upon it. The heat had communicated a soft glow to his cheeks, and he looked altogether too pretty for a boy. So Sherwood thought, as he looked from him to Rena. So Rena thought, as she contrasted the delicate lineaments and complexion of her brother with the manly brow and bold bearing of Sherwood Lindsey.

"Come to the fire, Rena," said Sherwood, for she stood in the back part of the room, wrapping her hands in the little red scarf, that had already acted the double part of tippet and turban.

"My fingers would ache too much," answered the young philosopher, "if I brought them too suddenly near the fire."

"True, I forgot," said he, withdrawing to the spot where she stood, and winding the said elastic scarlet web round his hands also. "I did not think you had so much consideration"

Colonel Fay went to inquire after the health of his wife who always kept her own room in the evening. This courtesy he never neglected, after an absence however short. Finding her quietly asleep, he sat down in her easy chair by the fire, and thought how strange it was, that a son of Herbert Lindsey should be thrown directly across his path. He was vexed with himself for the chilling coldness of his reception, and admired the frank and genial manners of the youth, which had disarmed his prejudices. If there was a man in the world whose character he detested, it was Herbert Lindsey, and he regretted much that accident had brought him in contact with one that bore his name. Yet he could not be guilty of injustice and inhospitality, or from the fear of wounding his sister's feelings, banish from his household a youth who had never wronged him. She herself had said "the Fays never were a mean race," and that would have been the height of meanness. Rena too would have thought it a stain upon the uprightness of his character, and she had such a clear sense of right and wrong, that young as she was, he respected her judgment, and often appealed to her opinion on subjects of moral rectitude. If she were older, he might feel some uneasiness on account of the pleasure she evidently felt in his presence, but she was nothing but a child, and the most single-hearted child in the universe. Colonel Fay thus reasoned himself to such a perfect state of composure that he unconsciously fell asleep, in his wife's comfortable arm-chair, while Henry stole softly to bed, and Rena, ever wakeful, sat with Sherwood, by Rachel's roaring fire, listening to his wild histories of a student's life, the daring but innocent frolic that led to his suspension, and the delight he felt that he had been sent into banishment to the beautiful village, near which she dwelt. He was glad to find he was to pursue his studies under the same master who taught her, though their hours of study were different; glad that she was studying Latin, reading Virgil, for he thought Latin the most noble study in the world; so grand, so expressive and

sonorous were the words, so rich the grammar of the language. His respect for Rena's understanding was evidently increased by the knowledge that she was a classical student; but when he learned, as he afterwards did, from her instructor, that she was the best Latin scholar in the academy, he thought as he did when he saw her skating more fearlessly, untiringly, than any boy in college, that "she was a glorious girl."

"But this pretty brother of yours, Rena," said he, "what a sweet little fellow he is! He is the perfect counterpart of Stella Lightner. Why didn't you take *him* to the skating ground with you?"

There was a slight dash of sarcasm in his voice, that Rena did not like. "You must not laugh at Henry," said she, "I shall not like you if you do. He is too pretty, too quiet, too good for a boy. I don't know what will become of him in college, where they are all so wicked and so wild; for I cannot be there to fight his battles for him, as I do at school."

"But *I* will, Rena, if he throws himself into the arms of my Alma Mater, before I leave her. I did speak of him in a mischievous spirit just now; for there is so little of the boy about him, I could not help smiling. But henceforth he shall be sacred to me, as *your* brother, and I will shield him from insult and persecution as if he were my own."

The young champion raised his head and looked as brave and protecting as any old knight of chivalry, and Rena felt as sure of Henry's safety, when exposed to the temptations of the world, as though armed legions surrounded him. Sherwood had kept possession of Rena's little red scarf, and when he rose to take leave, he twisted it about his neck, saying he intended to bear it away as a trophy of his victorious race.

"When you are a young lady," said he, "and we meet in the great world, I will show you this badge of triumph, and tell you of all I am thinking now."

The time of Sherwood's suspension was a happy one to Rena. He became so great a favourite with Colonel Fay, in spite of

his being the son of the Hon. Mr. Lindsey, that no face was so welcome to his fireside as that of the rusticated student. He assisted Rena in her Latin lessons, accompanied her and her father in their domestic skating excursions and moonlight sleigh-rides, and many a merry game of snow-balls did he have with Rena, under the leafless branches of the sycamore trees. He even imparted some of his own life and animation to Henry, who was sometimes guilty of making a noise in the magnetic presence of Sherwood, loud enough to call upon him his mother's reproof; for though Henry was now fourteen years old, she treated him like a weanling, and insisted upon his still wearing ruffled collars, and unshorn ringlets.

We will not linger long on this era of Rena's life—she would not stay a little child to please us; and though the bright dew-drops of morning are not yet exhaled from her spirit—though she is still a pure, fresh, sparkling creature, she is difficult to manage. She is that amphibious being, between a woman and child, that does not belong to any peculiar element; a thing of fire, air, earth, and water, as yet unanalyzed; whose constituent principles baffle the chemist's art. She is something like her own dark hair, which is too short to put up behind with a comb, and too long to fall over the brow, and, therefore, has no abiding place. Though Sherwood Lindsey says she is a "glorious girl" now, we think she will be far more interesting when she begins to fathom the mysterious depths of her being; when the master-spirit breathes on the lyre-chords of her heart, and the blush of dawning passion softens the glowing bloom of adolescence.

Farewell, then, for a little while, sweet, wild Rena—"sprite, gipsy, snowbird" of the north. May thy life be always as smooth and shining as the ice-plain on which thy young feet love to sport; but thawing winds will sweep over the surface, the diamonds will melt and turn into darkness—and then, sweet bird of a snowy clime, thou must fold thy wings or spread them for a sunnier land.

CHAPTER VII.

“ Acquaint thee with thyself, O man! so shalt thou be humble :
The hard hot desert of thy heart shall blossom with the lily and the
rose,
The frozen cliffs of pride shall melt, as an ice-berg in the tropics ;
The bitter fountains of self-seeking be sweeter than the waters of
the Nile.

But if thou lack that wisdom, thy frail skiff is doomed,
On stronger eddy whirling to the dreadful gorge ;
Untaught in that grand lore—thou standest, cased in steel,
To dare with mocking unbelief the thunderbolts of Heaven.”

PROVERBIAL PHILOSOPHY.

A DARK and handsome man sat at a writing-desk, surrounded by the illustrious dead—not in coffin and shroud, but in gilded cerements ; not enclosed in “ six dark boards,” but in two little sheets of pasteboard, small space for worlds of immortality. Yes! surrounded by the mighty magicians of past ages, silent yet eloquent, still yet omnipotent, whose thoughts, by a magic process, were transfused with electric speed and power into his own soul, with his head leaning on his hand and his eyes fixed on vacancy, sat the haughty master of Bellevue, the Hon. Herbert Lindsey.

Books lay piled up on the desk on which he leaned ; books rising, shelf above shelf, till they reached the lofty ceiling, lined the walls. The amphitheatrical form of the library, and the rich heavy curtains of dark-green damask, that swept back from the windows, gave an air of antique stateliness to the apartment, congenial to the taste of the owner. The marble busts of Plato, Socrates, Pericles, and half of the demigods

of Greece; cold, white effigies, so strangely combining the soul, the expression of life, with the immobility and ghastliness of death, were placed in niches, darkened so as to bring them out in bolder relief. Everything was classic, but nothing *more classic* than the form and features of him who was the lord of the scene.

In youth Herbert Lindsey had been pre-eminently handsome, and now in the full meridian of life, though passion, pride, and ambition, the three great master principles of his nature, had for years been wrestling in his bosom, they had left no trace of their warfare on his smooth, lofty brow, or silvered with premature frost his jetty hair. As Time "writes no wrinkles on the azure brow of ocean," though many a sad wreck is buried in its bosom, so it passed over his polished exterior, without betraying the dark secrets that lay beneath. Success had followed—honours crowned all his public deeds—wealth flowed in from many sources. He sat in the high places of his country's glory, and his eloquence was the pride and boast of his native state. A lovely wife presided over his domestic palace with dignity and grace; and a son, the inheritor of his talents, and heir of his fortune and name, promised fair to perpetuate its honours. But as the statesman sat in the solitude of his study, leaning his brow upon his hand, he felt that he had chosen a thorny path, and that the labourer, whom he beheld from his curtained window, quietly guiding his ploughshare and turning the glebe, was far happier than he. There was a gentle knock at the door; no one invaded his sanctuary without this communication of their approach. "It is Mrs. Lindsey," he said, and, without rising, he bade her enter. She came and stood beside her husband, a fair, pensive, sweet-looking woman, on whose face the third beatitude was written in heavenly characters. He motioned to a chair.

"Any pressing business, Mrs. Lindsey?" said he, glancing

at the massy pile of books at his side, as much as to say, "you see I am very busy."

"I am sorry to disturb you. I know how precious your time is, but you have not told me yet, whether I might receive this young girl, during your absence. It is asked of me as a particular favour, and I do not see how I can with any grace refuse."

"Who is she? - I remember your asking me something about this before, but my mind was occupied by other themes, and I forgot it. Some low girl, is it not?"

"A charity girl, but not necessarily a low one. She was taken from the almshouse when very small, and brought up by the private benevolence of ladies who were interested in her beauty and orphan condition."

"Did you say she was beautiful?"

"Exquisitely, remarkably so."

"A pretty companion for Sherwood, when he returns!"

"She will leave me before Sherwood arrives. It is because he is absent, that I prefer her at this time a member of my household. I was in Washington, when she first excited the interest of the community, and have been so much of a traveller since, making such short residences here, that I have never yet assisted in this act of kindness. Surely I ought to do so, when Heaven has given me such bounteous means."

"Send her this purse then," said he, throwing one on the table, "and let them trouble you no more on the subject. Will not that satisfy you?"

"Nay, my husband," cried she, gently putting aside the money, "it is care, tenderness, example that she needs. So young and beautiful, with no natural guardians to protect her, thrown upon a world so full of temptation, how sad is her destiny! It is easy to give money, but I would fain give far more out of the abundance of a sympathizing and maternal heart."

“Well! what is the name of this young paragon? Have I ever heard it?”

“You must have heard it, but you take so little interest in the gossip of the town, you have not heeded it. I do not recollect her mother’s name. She was a poor girl, who died at the almshouse. The child was called Stella, by some romantic lady, who was charmed by the brightness of her eyes.”

“I think there is more than one romantic lady in town. However, do as you please about the girl—only, *remember* her stay must be limited to the period of Sherwood’s absence. My boy shall form no low associations. He shall never be exposed to the fascinations of a base-born charity girl.”

“As you leave in the morning, I may say that she can come to-morrow?” meekly inquired Mrs. Lindsey, as she rose to leave the apartment.

“Her coming or going can make no difference to me—you may send for her to-night if you please.”

The votary of ambition was still a voluptuary in heart, and though too proud to acknowledge it, his curiosity was kindled by the vaunted beauty of the young charity girl. Mrs. Lindsey lingered on the threshold, looking back in the vain hope of meeting one glance of interest, directed towards herself, on the remembrance of which she might live, during months of absence. But the head of the statesman turned not. He had already drawn towards him a ponderous volume, and appeared absorbed in its contents. She softly closed the door, passed along the carpeted passage, that gave no echo to her stilly steps, entered her own room, and seating herself on a luxurious couch, wiped away a tear that would steal down her pale cheek. It was foolish, childish, to be wounded by a coldness, which for years had been freezing her heart. She could not expect the splendid mind, whose powers a nation claimed, would bring down its lofty thoughts to hers. She ought not to have intruded upon him in a sanctuary, which few dared invade, but she feared to take any steps, beyond the

usual circle of her domestic duties, unsanctioned by his will. Meek, gentle, and unresisting, she yielded with Eastern submission to his haughty sway, proud of his talents, his reputation and rank, but sighing in secret over chilled affections and a lonely heart.

The next morning, the carriage of Mr. Lindsey rolled down the sloping lane, that led from Bellevue to the public road. Through the tall, dark poplars that margined it, the light flashed dazingly on the face of the Senator, who drew his hat farther over his brow. He abhorred an excess of light, as the heavy curtains that shaded every window of his house indicated. As he reached the gateway and the coachman descended to unbar it, he saw a young person standing outside, waiting for the carriage to pass, whom he immediately recognised from description, as the beautiful charity girl. If any wonder should be expressed that he had never seen her before, let it be remembered that he passed most of his time in Washington, and when at home, had no more to do with his plebeian neighbours than the President himself. Stella, now in the spring-time of sixteen years, stood modestly waiting at the rich man's gate; a gipsy straw-hat shading, but fully revealing her face, and the morning sunbeams playing resplendently on the golden mirror of her hair. Mr. Lindsey bent forward and fixed upon the young girl a gaze too intense for mere admiration. It was dark and troubled. For one moment, it seemed that a chasm opened before him, threatening to draw him into the abyss, then it closed, and he stood on the opposite brink, in the midst of the verdure and flowers of youth, before passion or ambition had fastened her vulture clutches on his heart. Suddenly the verdure and flowers all faded, and dim ghosts of the past flitted before his eyes; a cold moisture gathered slowly on his temples, but still his eagle glance was strained on the charity girl waiting by the gate. Shrinking at length before this dark scrutiny, she curtsied low, and attempted to glide by the wheel.

“Stop!” said he, in a voice, of whose sternness he was not aware; “are you the young girl whom Mrs. Lindsey expects this morning?”

“Yes, sir,” she answered, trembling beneath an eye whose lightnings had scathed bolder brows than hers.

“Wait, then, and take this note to her,” said he, opening his pocket book and scribbling a few lines on the back of a letter, which he tore off hastily. Searching for a wafer, he sealed it, threw it from the carriage, and bade the coachman drive on. He had scarcely gone five paces before he regretted he had not commanded the girl to return and never appear within the limits of Bellevue. Could he have done so without compromising his dignity, without giving some reason for his apparently maniac conduct, he would have driven her from his home, the neighbourhood, the town. It was not without remorseful feelings he thought of her fair, beauteous form, and the destitution of her lot. The remembrance of another beauteous form, so closely resembling hers, awakened by her presence from the slumber of years, haunted him like an avenging ghost. “But it may not be,” thought he, “resemblances are often accidental. It must ever remain a mystery, for if I should make inquiries it would excite suspicion, and my name must never be associated with degradation. Poverty, death, and the almshouse—sad, sad combination!”

Folding his arms, and leaning back in his carriage, as far as he could withdraw, he breathed a deep and heavy sigh. We remember, when a little child, some one telling us that every sigh brought away with it, a drop of the heart’s blood. If this be true, such a sigh as Mr. Lindsey breathed, so full of remorse and anguish, must have exhausted a thousand. He met the school-children with their green satchels and smiling sunny faces, tripping along in the sunshine. It is their custom, in New England, to curtsy and bow, with lowly reverence, to all whom they meet, and it is a beautiful sight to see childhood

thus doing homage to maturity and age. He could not but observe how coldly this courtesy was paid to him. The smiles faded from their young lips, and sullen constraint took their place. He was the enemy of their sports. He had banished them from a beautiful green lawn near the school-house, because it was *his* ground, and therefore must be set apart as consecrated to pride. What harm could they do by running across the grassy plain? The brush of their light feet only gave a fresher tint to the herbage; the birds sung more merrily in the boughs, when their laughter went up on the air. Perhaps he thought this, as his stately carriage rolled along through these future lords of the land, and conscience, roused by a sudden and startling revelation, sat in triumph on its oft-deserted throne.

He passed Sunny Dell, reposing at the foot of the guardian mountain, in all the richness of its summer garniture. He thought of the now harsh and independent mistress of the place, and remembered the time when he knew her a gay, handsome, light-hearted belle, whose young affections he had won with so much art and toil, and whom he had deserted so treacherously and heartlessly for a fairer, wealthier bride. Then he thought of that lovely bride, that neglected wife, so gentle, fond, and submissive, now receiving to her home, to her arms and heart, in the loving-kindness and tender mercy of her generous nature, one, who—but why should he dwell on that? He knew not who she was—and the grave, hermetically sealed, revealed not the secrets deposited in its cold and silent bosom. Truly, the thoughts of the proud Senator were not merry companions.

Stella stood under the shelter of a spreading rose-bush till the sound of the carriage wheels died on the ear. She looked up to the house, whose green blinds were still unclosed, and she saw not a being moving about the enclosure. She looked down upon the note which she held in her hand, and which

she fully believed had some connexion with herself. The seal was still wet—she could open and reclose it, without fear of discovery, and drawing back deeper among the rose-boughs, she loosened the moist wafer, and read the contents. These were the few words addressed to his wife :—

“ *Remember* the conditions I imposed. The time must be limited within the possibility of *his* return. If the slightest intercourse be allowed, on your head be the consequences, however direful they may be.”

Stella thought she understood the drift of these lines. *She* was to be banished from Bellevue before the return of the son and heir ; for all intercourse between him and the child of poverty must be for ever prohibited. A vindictive smile curled her lip, while she resolved to baffle his foresight ; and triumphing in the consciousness of that beauty which had excited, at one glance, the fears of the father, she determined to remain and exert its full influence on the heart of the son. She had obtained the fulfilment of one of her most ardent desires, admission to the home of Sherwood Lindsey. She trusted to opportunity and her own powers to accomplish all her wishes.

The sweet mistress of Bellevue received the young charity girl with all the tenderness of a mother, and Stella was all gratitude, humility, and modesty. She never seemed to forget her lowly origin, though, such was the refinement and grace of her manners, it was difficult for others to remember it. She watched for every opportunity of usefulness, and studied Mrs. Lindsey’s slightest wishes, so that, if possible, she might anticipate them. Mrs. Lindsey loved flowers, and every morning her vases were decorated with roses and blossoms, “perfumed with fresh fragrance and glittering with dew.” She loved to have some one comb and brush her long hair, before retiring to her nightly rest. Stella delighted in this office, and nothing could be more gentle and soothing than her touch. Weeks passed away—and the young girl became every

day more endeared to her hostess, and more necessary to her happiness. "Poor girl!" thought she, as she gazed with growing admiration on her fair, young face; "if you were less lovely, you would be less dangerous, and I might keep you ever with me, to fill a daughter's place in my heart."

There was a picture of Sherwood, taken just before he entered College, which occupied a conspicuous place in his mother's apartment. It was a full-length portrait, and executed with great spirit and fidelity. The boy was represented in the open air, standing by the side of a beautiful pony, with one foot raised ready to mount the animal, over which his right arm was carelessly and gracefully thrown. There was life, beauty, boldness, expression, in the picture, which gave to immortality Sherwood's springing youth. It was the altar-piece where the fond mother paid her daily devotions. Stella never failed to place a vase of beautiful flowers beneath it, whose breath of odour rose as incense to this young household divinity.

"When will your son return?" she asked with apparent carelessness, of Mrs. Lindsey. "Is he not in Europe?"

"Yes—he has been travelling for a year with a private tutor;" she replied, in answer to the last question. To the first she said—"I expect him in a few months."

"How proud you must be of him!—how anxious to behold him! Ah! how happy must those be who have parents to love and idolize them! Had I a mother, and *such* a mother!" Stella bent her head on the white hand of Mrs. Lindsey and pressed her lips upon it.

"And in a few weeks I must banish this sweet girl from me!" thought the lady, twisting her fingers in the bright tresses that floated in lustrous beauty over her lap. "I must send her to some uncongenial home, where she will probably be treated with harshness or indifference. Oh! that I could adopt her as my own child!"

The reception of a packet of letters interrupted the flow of her compassionate feelings.

“Ah! one from Sherwood! this is an unexpected pleasure!” She opened it hastily. “Here, in a few days!—can it be possible? Listen, Stella—Sherwood is coming—in a few days, instead of months, he will be with me.”

Tears of joy gushed from her eyes. With the enthusiasm of a girl, who receives tidings from a long-absent lover, she pressed the letter to her lips, then again eagerly perused its contents. Stella remembered the note she had surreptitiously read—she remembered the words, “the time must be limited within the possibility of *his* return;” and knowing that the crisis had arrived, the colour forsook her cheeks.

At the sight of her sudden pallor, Mrs. Lindsey recollected her husband’s parting commands, and the thought of the pain she must inflict on the innocent girl, saddened the exuberance of her joy. She shrank from the ungracious office before her, but her own judgment told her that her husband’s decision was right, and that Sherwood must not be domesticated with the beautiful orphan.

“Stella, my sweet girl,” said she, the next morning, putting her arms kindly round her, “I grieve that I must part with you; but the time for which you were placed under my care is now expired. I shall probably leave here soon after my son’s return. At some future day, I trust you will again find your home with me. In the mean time, believe me your friend, anxious, tender, and loving, Stella. You have beguiled many a lonely hour. You have literally strewed roses in my path.” She looked at the sweet flowers blooming beneath the glowing semblance of her boy, and kissed the cheek fair as the floral offerings.

“You have been so kind, so more than kind,” sobbed Stella, sliding from her chair and burying her face in Mrs. Lindsey’s lap. “How can I ever leave you! Oh! Mrs. Lindsey, let

me stay! Let me be your servant!—let me live in your kitchen! I shall be happier there than in any parlour in the land! Dear, sweet Mrs. Lindsey, only let me stay!”

Poor Mrs. Lindsey! her heart was sadly troubled! It was so hard to resist that earnest, pleading voice; those tearful, starry eyes. But the dread of her husband’s anger! that was as a flaming sword, flashing before her eyes, guarding her promise.

“My dear child!” cried she, trying to raise her from her lowly position, “think me not unkind. You *shall* return to me; but now, there are reasons which I cannot explain, that forbid your longer stay. Did I follow the dictates of my own heart, you should never leave me, Stella—never!”

“Thank you, thank you, madam, for all your goodness!” cried Stella, rising and folding her hands meekly on her breast. “I will leave you to-morrow, to-night, this very moment, if you desire it!”

“No, no, not to-night. To-morrow will be soon enough; too soon for my wishes, dear child!”

Stella acknowledged her sense of this permission by a low and graceful curtsy, and left the apartment. The moment she was alone, the expression of her countenance changed. Instead of the downcast, Virgin Mary look she had just worn, there was bitterness and anger and cunning. Alas! that one so beautiful and young should be so guileful and designing.

“It is thus I have ever been treated,” murmured she to herself, “petted for a little while, and then discarded, because I am *poor—poor!* A child of the almshouse. But I have a power, and I will use it. A power to which riches and rank bow down. I *will* stay till their proud son comes. I *will* not be sent away the moment they hear his foot is to cross the threshold. An old crone whom I met the other day, who lives at the poor-house, *my* native home, said, that she dreamed that I married a rich man, and rode in my carriage, and so I will as sure as my name is Stella Lightner.”

This was not a point of such certainty as to make the oath a very binding one, but the strength of Stella's resolution was more powerful than her words. She stole softly up stairs and opened a little closet, contiguous to Mrs. Lindsey's sleeping-chamber, a kind of domestic cabinet, where, was a suite of small drawers, devoted exclusively to medicine. Stella had frequently been sent by Mrs. Lindsey to this receptacle, and she knew all that it contained. She knew what medicines could be taken with impunity, and what caused the most deadly languor and sickness, without exposing one to danger. Without a moment's hesitation she swallowed a nauseating potion of tartar-emetiç, carrying away a double quantity to her room, to repeat the dose, if necessary, to produce the desired effect. She might have feigned sickness, but the rosy transparency of her skin would betray the healthful current flowing beneath. A physician might be summoned, whose keen eye would detect the artifice. Now he might come, and she would defy the investigation. Returning to the room she had left, she sat down by Mrs. Lindsey, and asked her in a subdued and patient tone of voice, if she might have the privilege of reading aloud to her *once more*.

"My dear girl," said Mrs. Lindsey kindly, "you look pale, I fear you are not well. You had better not fatigue yourself."

Stella took up the book with a sickly smile, and began to read. The excited state she was in, when she took the medicine, caused its effects to be more speedily felt, and already it was circulating through her system, inducing faintness, dizziness, and the most deadly nausea. Frightened at the success of her daring stratagem, fearful lest she had swallowed by mistake some poisonous draught, and that she had exposed herself to suffering and perhaps death, she uttered a faint cry and fell back upon the sofa. Her eyes were closed, and there was no more hue upon her face than a snow-drift. In great alarm, Mrs. Lindsey rang the bell, then bending over Stella, raised

her head on her arm, and pressed her lips on her cold forehead. It was well she had called in the assistance of a servant. A terrible fit of retching and vomiting came on, prostrating her so completely, she was carried to her bed in a state of passive weakness. Having in vain endeavoured to check the deadly nausea, Mrs. Lindsey sent for their family physician, who, though a man of remarkable eminence in his profession, had not the gift of omniscience, and certainly had no conception of the dose she had swallowed. As the vomiting continued, with excessive faintness, he administered morphine, in a small quantity, leaving powders for her to take during the night. Mrs. Lindsey, who believed her cruel refusal to retain her in her household had given such a shock to her nervous system as to bring on this sudden and alarming illness, in an anguish of tenderness and self-reproach, hung over her beautiful and suffering charge. She had a couch removed to her bed-side, and insisted upon administering the opiates with her own hand. Stella had indeed taken a *master* dose, and it was not till she had swallowed all the powders the doctor prescribed, that she obtained rest from the billowy heavings which had tossed her so relentlessly. She dared not refuse the prescriptions presented by Mrs. Lindsey's own hand, though she feared every potion would be her last. Cold dew stood on her trembling limbs, while her brain, excited by the morphine, seemed crossed by fibres of fire, as well as her hot and blood-shot eyes. Terrified at the thought of becoming delirious, and betraying the secret of her duplicity, she pressed her hand upon her aching brow, begging them to bathe it in cold water, to relieve its burning. She was asleep when the doctor came in the morning, but the low whispered conversation between him and Mrs. Lindsey, close at her bed-side, awakened her. She lay without opening her eyes, listening to the remarks of her medical counsellor, terrified at the course he was recommending.

“ Her brain is evidently affected,” said he ; “ there is great

internal heat; we must apply blisters. I am sorry for it, but we shall be under the necessity of shaving her head."

"What, her beautiful hair? oh no, Doctor! try any other remedy. It would be too great a sacrilege. Spare, if possible, these luxuriant ringlets." Mrs. Lindsey passed her fingers through the locks that were scattered like sunbeams on her pillow. Stella resolved to die before allowing such a sacrifice. She determined, if the doctor did approach her for such a purpose, she would feign madness, of the frantic kind, and make him glad to avoid so dangerous a proximity.

"Well, we'll try the effect of leeches first."

So Stella, grateful for the salvation of her hair, and thinking the principle of non-resistance the best in her present position, was obliged to lie for hours with the cold, slimy creatures feeding on her white temples, her imagination picturing the hideous little animals bloated with her blood. A night of calm sleep composed her feverish brain, and the morning found her very weak, but pronounced free from all danger of inflammation of the brain. She was very careful of complaining of anything, apprehending some desperate remedy, and, in two or three days, she was able to sit up in an easy chair, at an open window, and drink in the sweet influences of the summer day. But the summer day had no sweet influences for her. There is an alchemy that can change the blue glory of the sky, and the green glory of the grass, and the cool balminess of the air, into mere cold, dull abstractions; and though Stella's eyes were fixed on these magnificent realities, her soul took them not in. She was thinking of the coming of Sherwood. If he delayed much longer, and she recovered entirely from her indisposition, what plea could she urge for remaining longer? what new stratagem could she invent to impose on her too credulous and trusting hostess? A strong feeling of revenge towards Mr. Lindsey, a desire to triumph over Rena, whom she had always associated with Sherwood

since the moonlight coasting and skating night at Sunny Deal, personal admiration of Sherwood himself, nourished by the daily contemplation of his picture, and a hope, a determination of self-aggrandizement, filled the bosom of Stella.

Mrs. Lindsey sat near her, looking down the avenue with anxious eye, watching for the coming of her son. As her fears for Stella subsided, her dread of her husband's anger returned ; and though she would not for worlds have breathed a thought to the young invalid suggestive of such an idea, her departure was the first and most ardent wish of her heart. Yes ! greater than her desire for her son's return. Yet weeks would probably pass before she could, without positive unkindness, be transferred to another home.

A carriage stopped at the gate, and while the coachman was unbarring it for the passage of the horses, a young man sprang out, vaulted over the fence, and ran up the lane.

" 'Tis Sherwood—my son !" exclaimed Mrs. Lindsey, and with a step as fleet as Stella's, she vanished from the room. But Stella's fleet steps were now pinioned and doomed to remain passive in her chair. She gazed upon the young man so rapidly approaching, whose identity his mother's rapturous exclamation had just proved. Raising his eager, animated eyes to the window, he caught a glimpse of the fair apparition reclining there, and with a lingering step he lifted his hat, bowing and smiling, with such a radiant expression, Stella's cheek blushed crimson with delight. The joy of return was in his heart, on his lips, in his eyes, and a familiar face, less fair than hers, would have been greeted with rapture. Then he vanished from her gaze, and Stella was left to imagine the fond embraces that greeted him on the threshold. A natural feeling of regret for her own brotherless, sisterless, unconnected situation softened the asperity of her feelings. She wished she was Sherwood's sister, that she too might fly to greet, and throw, without shame or censure, her arms of

welcome round him. She thought if she had such a brother to take her kindly and protectingly by the hand, and shield her from the scorn and contumely of the world, her heart would be full of good and gracious influences, and all her schemes of cold and selfish policy would be crowded out. It was one of those angel moments, that come like the breath of the sweet south wind, "stealing and giving odour." Tears gathered softly, slowly into her eyes, and fell drop by drop upon her cheek. Then, she thought of a love, dearer than a brother's, and how happy life must be to those, whose hearts, twined together by links of roses, mingle in fragrance and beauty, till life becomes one sweet identity. Unfortunately, the vanity, which praises of her personal loveliness had nurtured, whispered but of one means to secure that love. Rising, she drew near a large mirror that adorned the chamber, and gazed upon the image reflected from its surface. Methinks, there was a soft rustling sound, like the spread of departing wings, for the angel moment was gone. It might have been the waving of the silken curtain, or the fluttering of the leaves, or the light fall of her muslin robe—but it is certain, the guardian spirit, that watched with such trembling hope those crystal drops, fled away *grieved*—from the thoughts that it saw dimming the disk of the mirror.

A beautiful moral is embodied in one of the stories of the Arabian Nights. One of the genii gives a glass to a young man, who has sought their aid, and tells him, whenever he sees a young maiden, however fair and innocent she might appear, not to judge by the spotlessness of the exterior, but to look upon the crystal talisman. If the translucent orb became dim by her breath, there was a want of purity within. Long the young man searches for the maiden with unpolluted breath in vain, and is about to return the talisman in despair, when he at last finds one, whose gentle respiration steals over the mirror, and turns to sunbeams there.

CHAPTER VIII.

“ Oh ! my son, my son !

We will not part in wrath !—the sternest hearts,
Within their proud and guarded fastnesses,
Hide something still, round which their tendrils cling
With a close grasp, unknown to those who dress,
Their love in smiles. And such wert thou to me,
The all which taught me, that my soul was cast
In Nature's mould.”

VESPERS OF PALERMO.

STELLA, still in the interesting character of an invalid, was sitting in the lower piazza, by the side of Mrs. Lindsey, while Sherwood, standing against one of the pillars, played carelessly with the honeysuckle vine, that, twining round the upper part, drooped over his head. There was not the slightest breath of air stirring. The tall poplars, piercing the heavens with their lance-like summits, stood with immovable foliage, like green petrifications, and even the light leaves of the rose-bushes seemed holding their fragrant breath, so still were their slender petioles. The clouds, that had been floating white and fleecy before the mid-day sun, now melting off into a web fine as the down of the gossamer, then becoming more opaque, and assuming the form of glittering scales, the silver laminæ of heaven,—were now rolling downward, following the declivity of day, and gathering in darkening masses round the western sun. Dark and heavy at their base, but crowned with dazzling rose-tints, that deepened here and there into glorious crimson, scarlet and gold, they leaned forward, over the undulating horizon, with a grandeur and grace that belong only to

these "warriors of the storm," the heralds of the "thunder-drum of heaven."

"There will be a thunder-shower soon," said Mrs. Lindsey, with a slight shudder. "I knew one was approaching, by the oppression of the atmosphere."

"Do you fear, my mother?" asked Sherwood, who was gazing with kindling eye, through those golden vistas.

"I do not exactly fear, but I feel an indescribable awe, a presentiment of coming evil, a dread indefinite and mysterious. I cannot describe it."

"Strange!" said Sherwood, "There is nothing in nature I love so much as a thunderstorm. I feel then, a strength and power that seems to sleep at other times. I could battle with the elements and make them my vassals. I could run up the rugged peaks of the clouds and catch hold of the lightning's chain. You smile, mother, as if you doubted my words, but I do actually feel as if I could do this, and far more."

"Bold, extravagant boy! I hope you will not try so dangerous an experiment."

Sherwood looked at Stella, and turning as he did from the dark cloud to her face, the contrast was so sudden, so striking, it seemed to shine with the beauty of an angel. Sickness had imparted a kind of languishing softness to her countenance, and enhanced, if possible, the transcendent fairness of her complexion. She was dressed in white, for Mrs. Lindsey, if not wisely, at least kindly, clothed her in garments, more congenial to her own taste and Stella's beauty, than her station in life. Sherwood, who remembered her as a little girl, in coarse calico frocks, whom, with cultivated aristocracy, he looked down upon as the poor-child of the almshouse, had never before been fully aware of the uncommon character of her loveliness. It flashed upon him as something celestial, and he wondered he had not been more impressed by it. Stella met his fixed and admiring glance, and hopes, which a few moments before

were faint and flickering, became strong and triumphant. A rosy cloud covered her face, and added to it a thousand new charms. Mrs. Lindsey noticed all this, and never had her husband's prohibition and threatened wrath assumed so terrible a character to her imagination. Should he come and find her there, find them together after his warnings both spoken and written, how dark would be his anger! And yet how could she have prevented it? She could not have turned the poor girl dying from her door. She could call in the evidence of the physician to prove her sickness, and apparently dangerous condition. But still this would not appease her husband's resentment, for she might have obeyed him more implicitly than she had done. She might have taken Stella by the hand and told her kindly and frankly, the interdiction given and the reason too. She might have told her that the Hon. Mr. Lindsey did not choose his son to associate with any but the honourable of the land. She was not obliged to clothe her in white and becoming robes, to adorn her loveliness, or to bring her down, as she had done that evening, in compassion for her loneliness and dejection, into the presence of her son. She was a gentle, tender, loving woman, and she could not have acted otherwise, without violating the holiest principles of her nature, but she was a meek, timid, irresolute one, and she shrunk from the consequences of her conduct, with a dread, which guilt only ought to feel.

Stella showed at this moment the strong will, that can make the physical elements its vassals. She had an unusual terror of electric power, and, had she followed the instinct of her nature, she would have fled to her chamber, scared by the lightning that now darted forth from the bosom of the cloud, like the tongue of fiery serpent. But Sherwood loved such scenes, and she too would remain and look with rapture on the sublime phenomena, and share his exultation. Sherwood entreated his mother to go in, where she would not be exposed to the

blinding flashes, but there was a species of fascination mingled with her awe, that drew her glance to the firmament, though the next moment it was sure to be covered with terror. Amid the distant rolling of the thunder, the sound of carriage wheels was not distinguishable, and though they stopped at their gate they knew it not, as their faces were turned in a different direction. A gentleman was near the steps of the piazza, before they were aware of his approach, for he walked on the grassy side-walk, and his steps made no sound.

“My father!” exclaimed Sherwood, springing down the steps and seizing both hands in the joy of meeting.

Mr. Lindsey held his son’s hand with a grasp of steel, and while he ascended the long flight of steps he thus held him, looking steadily in his face, while a gleam of joy and pride lightened the darkness of his own, like the lightning on the cloud over his head. Mrs. Lindsey rose to meet him, but her trembling limbs could scarcely support her. All that she had been dreading was written on his dark and flashing countenance.

“You did not expect me, madam,” said he, without taking the tremulous hand she extended—“my coming seems to have disturbed you. Congress suddenly adjourned for a short time, and I hastened home to welcome my son. I did not expect to find intruders here—I did not expect to find my absolute commands violated.”

“Come with me, my husband,” she cried, laying her hand entreatingly on his arm; “I will explain everything. I have not wilfully acted contrary to your will.”

“And what was my will, madam?” he exclaimed, losing sight of every restraint, in the blaze of his anger. “Did not I command you to send this girl from you, before the possibility of my son’s return? Was not this the condition on which she entered these doors? How happened all this, I

say, if you did not *mean* to brave my authority and dare my anger?"

Mrs. Lindsey sunk down on the seat she had quitted, and covered her face with both hands. Sherwood stepped forward, and, placing himself in front of his mother, with a pale and resolute countenance, looked steadfastly in his father's face

"I am sorry to hear you speak to my mother in this manner, sir. It is unworthy of you. I cannot allow my own father to forget that he is a gentleman."

As the Senator beheld the youthful figure of his son, interposing itself as a shield before the sinking form of her whom his wrath was withering, a thrill of admiration at his moral courage and noble bearing penetrated his soul. But the thrill was transient—his anger abiding.

"Beware, rash boy! forget not the respect due to your father!"

"Let him remember what is due to himself, and he shall never complain of a want of filial reverence."

"Mrs. Lindsey, follow me to the library—I would speak with you alone. Sherwood, go into the house. I forbid your remaining here. And as for this girl, let me tell her, that the home she left for this is a far more fitting residence for her."

"I am no longer a boy, nor will I be ordered like one!" cried Sherwood, folding his arms and flashing defiance from his dark eyes.

"Oh! Sherwood, for my sake, for your mother's sake, Sherwood, obey your father!" cried Mrs. Lindsey, clasping her hands in agony at a scene, beyond her worst fears.

"For your sake, mother, I would do anything—die, if need be; and would I had died before I had lived to see the day when I trembled to leave a mother exposed to a father's angry passions!"

The bitter anguish of his tone struck to the very heart of the Senator, and recalled him to a sense of his own dignity. He felt something as the inebriate feels, when the fumes of intoxication roll away, leaving nothing but a consciousness of degradation and shame. He had allowed his passions to master him, and he was humbled in his own eyes. He did not, however, swerve from his purpose any more than the surgeon who winds his silk handkerchief around the steel that is to cut into the quivering flesh.

Stella, who had risen on his entrance, and remained a silent spectatress of the tempest she had herself roused, felt a kind of vindictive joy in this acknowledgment of her power,—this strange tribute to her wondrous beauty. When Sherwood threw himself before his mother, dauntlessly bearding the lion in his lair, in the brave beauty of youthful heroism, she gazed upon him with passionate admiration. As for the scorn and contempt of the father, she repaid it with bitterness and hatred, and a spirit of vengeance took possession of her, terrible in one so young. She resolved to yield to his commands, to go that moment, in the face of the coming storm, certain that Sherwood would feel an interest in her fate, as the victim of his father's cruelty, that she could not excite by remaining with his permission under his roof. She dared not wrestle openly against the strong man's iron will, but she determined to corrode and eat away his power in secret, like the consuming rust.

It is astonishing how much more fearful is moral than elemental strife. All this time the lightning had been darting more vividly, the thunder rolling deeper and nearer, and yet they heeded it not. At least none but Stella, who had wrought herself for the part she was going to act. Turning to Mr. Lindsey, with an air which would have made the fortune of a *debutante*, she said, without quailing at his stern glance—

“I am going, sir—nor would I have stayed till this moment

had not sickness prevented my departure. Your kind lady would not throw me across the threshold, when I had not strength to walk over it. I would not stay another hour beneath your roof, sir, if I knew the lightning would strike me dead by the way-side !”

Then taking Mrs. Lindsey’s hand and kissing it, and curtsying gratefully to Sherwood, she ran down the steps, which were already wet with the large, splashing drops that fell from the edge of the thunder-cloud.

“Stop her !” cried Mrs. Lindsey. “Husband, for the love of heaven and your own soul, do not drive her away in this storm ! She has been *so* sick ! If she dies, God will judge you for it !”

“Bid her return till to-morrow, then. I did not drive her away,” muttered he. Sherwood sprang forward to detain her, but his father’s strong arm arrested him—

“Leave it to your mother, sir. It is no business of yours.”

“But she goes, sir ! She reaches the gate ! My mother must not go out in the rain ! It will not become *you* to run after her ! I must go !” And breaking loose from his father, who felt the truth of his words too keenly to contradict them, he flew after the fugitive, whose white dress was fluttering through the gate. It evidently required eloquence and some force to induce her to return, for she clung to the gate, even after Sherwood brought her back, and endeavoured to release herself for a second flight. She ascended the steps with a reluctant air, looking proudly at Mr. Lindsey as she passed by.

“Go right to your room and change your *wet* dress,” said Mrs. Lindsey. “I tremble for the consequences of this exposure. Oh ! Stella, do not keep me in this state of agitation, but go.”

“Only at *your* request, *your* command, madam,” said Stella, slowly entering the house.

“We had better all go in,” cried Mr. Lindsey, when the

sound of Stella's retreating footsteps were heard no longer. "The rain will melt us here!"

Mrs. Lindsey mechanically acted on her husband's suggestion, and the father and son were left alone.

"I suppose I may remain here *now*, sir!" said Sherwood, throwing himself on a seat. "I am sheltered from the rain, and I love to gaze upon the storm."

Mr. Lindsey walked backward and forward the whole length of the piazza, several times, with slow steps, then went up to his son and laid his hand upon his shoulder—

"Sherwood!"

"Sir!"

"My son!"

"Father!"

"My son"—there was a slight tremulousness in his voice. The hand laid upon the shoulder lifted itself to the dark locks that were rustling in the storm-breeze—"this is an unpleasant meeting after more than a year's absence."

"It is, sir."

"You have shown great love and reverence for your mother, and I honour you for it. If I have appeared harsh and passionate, beyond reason, I have a cause, which, if known, would explain all, if it did not justify. More I cannot say; but this I am constrained to utter, for I would not forfeit the respect of my son."

"Father, if you knew half the respect, the veneration I bear you, half the anguish I suffered, when I thought you forgetful of your high character—" The voice of the young man choked. He rose and turned away to conceal his emotion; then with an instinct of nature wholly irrepressible, bowed his head on his father's shoulder, whose arm now encircled his neck. Never, perhaps, had the proud statesman been so completely unmanned. Sherwood was his hope, joy, and pride, the one being he loved better than himself, the Elisha on whom the mantle

of his talents and fame must fall. But man soon conquers the weakness to which woman yields, at least such a man as Mr. Lindsey. He led the way into the house, where his wife awaited them, with pale cheeks and a sinking heart. In his then softened mood, her meek and suffering countenance affected him painfully. He was generally cold and arbitrary, but never had he allowed his passions to trample on her feelings so lawlessly before. He went and sat down by her, and took the hand that lay passive on the arm of the sofa. "I have been too hasty, Emily! Forgive me!"

That simple act, those few words, turned as by magic the whole current of her feelings. The mere sound of her Christian name coming from his lips, fell like music on her ear. She longed to throw herself on his neck, to lean upon his bosom, to tell him of the love that had survived coldness, indifference, and harshness, to assure him of her submission to his wishes, whatever they might be. But she dared not do it. She feared to extinguish this little gleam of tenderness so precious to her heart. She was so humble, had so little self-appreciation, she justified all his neglect by comparing her waning beauty and feeble attractions with the splendour of his yet unfaded manhood. She only pressed the hand that held hers, and tried to speak, but could not.

"Perhaps you had better go and see if the girl needs any care. I would not keep you from it, Emily."

Again he had called her by the once-loved name of *Emily*. Grateful for the permission to do what her heart prompted, she quitted the room, but as she closed the door, looked back upon him with a smile of reconciliation so lovely, that it lighted up her wan features with something of the brightness of their primeval beauty. The eyes of the father and son followed her departure, then turning from the door their glances met.

"Yes," said the first, answering the glance, for no word

had been spoken, "if evil falls on me, she will have a protector far kinder and more devoted than I have ever been. But, Sherwood," added he, assuming some of his usual staidness, "we must understand each other fully. Never let the scene of to-day be renewed. I have looked upon you as a boy heretofore, I now place confidence in you as a man. There *must be no* intercourse between you and the girl now under your mother's protection. Three hours ago, I would have extracted a binding promise from you; now I trust to your honour."

"There shall be no voluntary intercourse on my part, father," replied Sherwood, after a pause, which sent the blood to his own temples, and drew it from his father's face, for the colour forsook his very lips, while he witnessed the mental struggle of his son.

"Sherwood, do you hesitate?"

"I will obey you, as far as I can, sir, without compromising my character as a gentleman and a *man*. If I should meet this unfortunate girl in circumstances that appealed to my protection and required my aid, every feeling of chivalry and honour would be enlisted in her behalf. Then and then only should I feel justified in departing from the *letter* of your prohibition. The *spirit* of it breathes from my own lips at this moment! I know it! I feel it!"

"You feel an interest stronger than I imagined on this subject," cried Mr. Lindsey, his pale brow darkening, while his piercing eyes, fixed upon his son, seemed to read the lowest depths of his heart.

"She is young, beautiful, and unprotected, and I pity her, but I have too much of my father's spirit ever to think of allying myself with one of low connexions or doubtful lineage. Any other interest you cannot think me base enough to cherish."

Mr. Lindsey caught his son's hand, and pressed it with a strength of which he was not aware.

"I am satisfied," said he; "I trust you. My happiness, my honour, is safe in your keeping."

Drawing a deep inspiration, as if a heavy load were rolling upward from his breast, he induced Sherwood to speak of his journey, his impressions of the past and hopes and plans for the future, till the agitation of both subsided, and the cause that created it seemed forgotten.

That night, when Sherwood was alone in his room, on opening a trunk which he had not unpacked since his return, for a book he had placed in it, he saw gleaming beneath the folds of white linen, the scarlet trophy he had won from the wild skating girl, and which he had carried with him to foreign lands. He had not seen her since, a rusticated student, he was associated with so many of her gladdening winter exercises and fireside pleasures. Their paths had widely diverged, but he always felt, that there was a strong, magnetic sympathy, which would draw them together again, though sundered as far as pole from pole. He took up the soft relic and laid his cheek on the warm, elastic wool. He thought of the young Snowbird, skimming the glittering ice, with her glowing crown, defined like a crescent of fire on the silver firmament. He wondered how it would look, above the soft gilding of Stella's rippling hair—scarlet and gold, the mingling hues of royalty. He compared the waxen delicacy of Stella, with the ardent hue of Rena's sun-dyed cheek; the starry brightness of Stella's sapphire eyes, with the velvet softness and darkness of Rena's.

Then he reflected on the strange and harrowing incidents of the day; the mysterious earnestness of his father's prohibition, which he nevertheless attributed to the towering pride which distinguished him among all men; on the sad destiny of the poor charity girl, whose singular beauty seemed her

greatest crime, till, forbidden as he was to manifest the pity and sympathy of his young, chivalrous nature, she grew in romantic interest on his imagination. Gradually all these images formed a strange combination. The scarlet tiara adorned his father's senatorial brows. His mother was skating on a sea of glass. Rena and Stella had exchanged eyes, and what a wonderful change did it make in their faces! He was asleep, carelessly extended on the carpet, his trunk his pillow, the red band of Rena encircling his neck.

CHAPTER IX.

“I saw two beings in the hues of youth
 Standing upon a hill, a gentle hill,
 Green and of mild declivity—the last
 As 'twere, the cape, of a long ridge of such,
 Save that there was no sea to lave its base,
 But a most living landscape, and the wave
 Of woods and cornfields, and the abodes of men
 Scattered at intervals, and wreathing smoke
 Arising from such rustic roofs—
 These two, a maiden and a youth, were there
 Gazing;—the one on all that was beneath
 Fair as herself—but the boy gazed on her.

BYRON'S DREAM.

“Away—away! my early dream
 Remembrance never must awake—
 Oh! where is Lethe's fabled stream?
 My foolish heart, be still or break.”

BYRON.

HAVE you forgotten Aunt Debby? We hope not; for though years have passed since you have visited Sunny Dell, she still reigns there in undivided sovereignty. Rena is with her now, for many changes have taken place in her own home,

since she appeared the wild skating girl of the meadow, or the wise Latin scholar poring over the pages of Virgil, with Sherwood Lindsey, by the side of the evening fire. Her mother was dead, not of the nervous debility, which she regarded as a fatal disease, but of a contagious fever that swept over the neighbourhood, in a vein of destruction, like the hurricane, selecting here and there a victim. In her last moments, that phenomenon occurred, which is so often seen in the moral as in the physical world—the sudden clearing away of the mists of error from life's setting sun. She seemed to have a prophetic view of the trials to which her long-protracted indulgence would expose her son, and to take in, with her brightened vision, the superiority and disinterestedness of Rena's character. Calling her to her bed-side, she committed her brother to *her* care and guardianship, in conjunction with her father's, as if *she* were the elder, and of the stronger sex. Usually the dying mother thinks most of the daughter whom she is about to leave exposed to temptation, and liable to sorrow and suffering; but it was her boy, her beautiful, quiet, girl-like boy, for whom her last thoughts trembled, her last prayers were offered. Rena loved her mother, *because* she was her mother, and therefore lamented her; but there was no sympathy in their natures—they had scarcely one thought or taste in common. Far different from the instinct of the child, which draws it to the bosom of its mother, was the intense affection, reverence, respect she bore her father. She worshipped him as the representative of her God on earth, and believed in him, as a living Gospel, having all the precepts of our Saviour written on his heart and life.

Colonel Fay's sorrow for his wife was deep and true. He mourned for her as the mother does for the feeble infant dependent on her tenderness and cares. He missed the soft whisper of her complaining voice, the odour of medicine that always pervaded her apartment, the little row of labelled vials

that adorned her mantel-piece. It looked strange and desolate to see the couch smooth and high, covered with snowy drapery, instead of bearing a pale and slender form, so long its daily burden. He could not convince himself that it was no longer necessary to walk about the house with a stilly tread, to speak in a subdued voice, for fear of jarring the delicate nerves he was so careful to save from the slightest pain.

But time brought with it resignation, comfort, cheerfulness. He had a large, warm, generous heart, and he found that the world contained loveable objects besides his children. His neighbours noticed that the Colonel was more particular about his dress on Sunday, that his tall figure was more erect, that he went several nights in succession to visit a certain widow, to sympathize with her in her loneliness. He had known her when a young girl, and came very near loving her, when the beauty of his wife captivated his fancy and blinded his judgment. They were both free, both wiser for experience, both possessed of sufficient property to lift them above the imputation of being actuated by mercenary motives. With so many congenialities, it is not surprising that they wedded, and Rena saw her second mother take the place of honour at her father's board. At first she felt the natural shrinking of youth from seeing a comparative stranger fill that sacred station, but she would as soon have cut off her right hand and have plucked out her right eye as oppose her father's right to bestow his name and affections on another. She had no mean jealousy that he would love *her* less, nor did she believe her own mother would sleep less quietly in her green sward bed because the home of her widowed husband was gladdened by another's presence.

The new Mrs. Fay was a woman of mind as well as heart; who attended energetically to her domestic duties, yet was always ready to share the evening hours with her husband, in

the pleasures of reading and conversation—pleasures in which Rena always participated, as a companion, rather than a child. Henry was in College, so he was withdrawn from the circle where the good and gracious influences of his step-mother diffused so much happiness, and it was not very long before Rena, too, was importuned by Aunt Debby to come to Sunny Dell. Her brother, she said, no longer needed her. He had a wife who was a helpmate indeed, and that was more than he had ever had before. She was lonely, she wanted her favourite, and she hinted that it would be for her interest to gratify the wishes of Aunt Debby. This hint Colonel Fay did not repeat to his daughter, but it had some influence in inducing him to sacrifice any selfish feeling on his own part. If his sister thought of making Rena her heiress, it was not for him to put barriers in her way. So Rena, at sixteen, appeared again in Aunt Debby's mountain-guarded home.

We asked you, a little while ago, if you had forgotten Aunt Debby? but it is no matter if you have, if you become acquainted with her at this period. We think you will like her better now. The years which have elapsed since you last saw her, which have changed the folded bud to the just opened blossom, have mellowed instead of fading her. The short, stiff black hair that stuck up all over her head, and gave a porcupine fierceness to her appearance, has grown long and soft, and is put up in a braid behind. Not that she is guilty of braiding it herself—the idea is perfect *nonsense*. She always tucks it up in a mysterious-looking twist, that does not take two seconds to arrange; but Rena, bewitching little Rena, whom nobody can resist, has actually persuaded her to let her comb, brush, and braid her hair *à la mode*, and to do sundry other womanly things she never thought of before. She has had so few to care for her, to take the least interest how she looks, she has been so engrossed with worldly cares, or given up to bitter memories; then every one is afraid to make any

personal remark to her, she is so independent and peculiar. They look upon her as one who has sworn enmity to all the light graces of her sex, and they only talk behind her back of her odd mode of dress and unfeminine appearance. The young tiring-woman is now at her task—let us peep in Aunt Debby's chamber, and see the charm by which Rena tames her to submit to the process.

Have you never felt a soft, soothing, delicious sensation steal over you, bringing quiet, pleasant thoughts to the mind, and a dewy slumberousness to the eyes, as a gentle hand passed over your hair ; passed and repassed, each time touching the "electric chain, by which we are darkly bound ?" Thus Rena's hand smoothed, with mesmerising influence, Aunt Debby's hitherto neglected locks, softening at the same time the inner woman.

"Now, dear aunt, sit still a little longer," said the bower-maiden, "till I finish this beautiful braid ; you have no idea how soft and glossy it looks !"

"Beautiful fiddlestick ! child ! Who ever thought of calling anything beautiful about me *now* ? It's all nonsense."

"No, it is not, aunt. It does look nice and pretty. There, let me smooth it down on your forehead a little more. Turn your head a little to the right. Now, look in the glass, Aunt Debby, and see if it does not become you."

Rena skipped across the room and brought a toilet glass, which she held directly in front of her aunt's face. Aunt Debby tried to shut her eyes, and said she would not do so silly a thing as to look at herself, but she did take a sly peep, just long enough to catch the reflection of her smooth black hair parted on her brow, softening the outline of her really fine classic features.

"Why, the child is really making a fool of me," said she, patting Rena, affectionately on the shoulder ; "who cares how an old woman like me looks ?"

“But, you are not an old woman, Aunt Debby, I won’t let you call yourself so. There is not one gray hair among all these jetty locks. Many a young girl would be proud to wear them. And now, aunt, please let me take that lace collar I saw in your shell drawer, and put it on your neck. It will grow yellow and old-fashioned lying there. I want you to wear something white about your throat, like other ladies, aunt. May I get it?”

Rena pleaded as if it were a personal favour to herself, a matter of vital importance to the interests of society: and how could she refuse?

There was an obsolete case of drawers in her room, where her best articles were deposited. Each drawer had a peculiar name. There was the narrow drawer at the top, the two corner drawers, and in the centre, one of broader dimensions, and of richer appearance. The dark mahogany was grooved upward in curving lines, resembling the convolutions of a shell. From this circumstance it received its name, and Rena, when a little six year old child, had a most intense admiration for this receptacle. She used to watch the light playing on the projecting lines, and the deep shadows settling in the grooves, till it became a really sublime object. She did not think then, she would ever be privileged to explore its hidden recesses. She remembered once, when she only laid her hand on the shining brass handles, feeling Aunt Debby’s thimble suddenly rapping on her brain, scaring away all ideas of the sublime and beautiful.

“Silly child!” repeated she, while Rena attached the lace to the dark binding of her dress; “what is the use of such a folderol as this? It was given to me, or you would not have found it in my possession. Foolish little girl, you will make everybody laugh at me, and say I am fixing up for another husband.”

“No, indeed, aunt, they will only say how well and lady-like you look. The mistress of this beautiful Sunny Dell *ought*

to dress like a lady. You cannot think what a magic there is in that little piece of lace. How it softens the outlines of your face. Don't shake your head, aunt, you know it does! Many a time have I heard my father say, how handsome, how gay, how admired you were in youth."

Aunt Debby's countenance changed instantaneously. "Do not recall the memories of my youth," said she, "they are all vanity and vexation of spirit. What matters it now to me, that I was once gay and admired? When I think what I once was, and what I now am, it sometimes seems to me that I have died and awakened to another existence. Rena," she added, in a tone so different from her usual abrupt manner of speaking, that Rena scarcely recognised her voice, "I mourn not over my vanished youth and beauty, but I mourn for the blight that fell on the bloom of my heart, for the withering of my green affections, for the gall that turned to bitterness the sweet fountain of feeling."

She paused, her head drooped on her hand, and her eyes were fixed on the opposite window, through which was beheld the lofty turrets of Bellevue, catching the sunbeams above the dark, sloping lines of poplars. Rena looked upon Aunt Debby with a doubt of her identity, her language was so different from any she had ever used before, her countenance so changed. She longed to ask her the history of her youth, the romance of her early life, but delicacy and respect restrained her. She had a conviction that it was Sherwood Lindsey's father who had infused the gall-drops in the current of youthful affection; and she felt an unaccountable dread of hearing *his* name associated with wrong and, perhaps, crime.

She loved Aunt Debby better than she had ever done before. She pitied, sympathized with her. She was of an age when the heart is full, ready to run over with sensibility, and panting for objects on which to pour the swelling tide.

“Dear aunt”—she could not help saying. There was so much feeling in her voice, that Aunt Debby started, and, ashamed of the betrayal of emotions so seldom witnessed by others, she pushed back her chair, and told Rena to let the curtain fall over the window, to exclude the rays of the sun. In a short time she was as busy as ever about her work, scolding Rena, in an affectionate manner, for making her look so like a fool. But she soon became accustomed to *looking so*, and the change in her manners corresponded with her softened exterior. She continued odd, and careless of the world’s opinions, but the sharp corners of her character were rounding off, and the rough places getting smoother, and the difficult ones more easy.

Rena, who was allowed the freedom of the whole house, from garret to cellar, had, with very peculiar taste, chosen the attic for her boudoir, where she passed several hours every day, when her aunt was engaged in household duties, and did not require her assistance. The charm of this place was a chest of books, which Aunt Debby had removed there to have them out of the way. They were connected with the faded romance of her life, and she did not like to see them. Rena, who was famous for exploring little nooks and corners, discovered these buried treasures, and seized upon them with an avidity and enthusiasm that converted the lone garret into a scene peopled with glorious company. Her father’s library consisted chiefly of histories, biographies, and didactic works. From these she had laid a goodly foundation on which to rear the graceful superstructure of lighter literature. Now she was transported from the real to the ideal. Columbus felt not more rapture when he first inhaled the breezes of the virginal world, than she, when the green isles and star-lit streams of poesy, and the enchanted land of romance, met her ravished vision. Like him, she knew there was a far-off clime she had never yet explored, but imagination could not picture half its riches.

There was an old arm-chair, of very curious architecture put away in this upper region as a piece of useless furniture, which Rena dragged forth and placed by the window as her throne. It was of Indian manufacture, constructed of rude forest boughs, interlaced with skill and some taste, and it had long had the appellation of the *Sachem*. Deep in the *Sachem* Rena sat, bound by a spell so strong, the roof might have fallen upon her head without her knowing it. It seemed as if a strong wind was sweeping over the Eolian lyre of her soul, wakening the wildest, richest, deepest harmony.

Till now the music of her being had slept, and it gushed forth responsive to the varying strains that were floating around her. Now it was the warbling melody of Moore, that sweet nightingale of song, or the wizard harp of the Minstrel of the North, or the deep, thrilling, passionate notes of Byron. Again, Campbell's clarion lay swelled like a silver trumpet on her ear, and she felt ready to march to "glory or the grave." One day Aunt Debby found her when the spell was on her, seated in her lofty-backed sachem, with Lalla Rookh before her, open at the Fire-worshippers. She saw not Aunt Debby, she heard not her approach; she was listening to the voice of Hafed; she was standing by his side, gazing with Hinda on the moonlight flood. A flush of crimson was burning on her cheek, her lips quivered with emotion, her eyes sparkled and darkened with alternate light and shadow.

"Do look at the child!" exclaimed Aunt Debby. Rena started up and looked around wildly, to see the company, whose attention her aunt was soliciting. But as no one was there but herself, it must have been the weird spirit under whose dominion she then was. "Do look at the child!" repeated she more emphatically.

"Why, aunt?" said Rena, brought back most reluctantly to the world of reality, and blushing for her abstraction—

"Why, I have been standing here at least ten minutes, and

you saw me no more than if you were stone blind. I don't believe if Pharaoh and all his host were trampling about the garret, you would have heard them. Rena, I am sorry you've got hold of these things. You have wild-fire enough in you, already. You shouldn't feed it. I think I must lock up the chest, and march the old Sachem back against the wall."

"Oh, no, dear aunt, don't deprive me of this happiness. I'll come whenever you want me, stay with you as long as you wish, but leave me this newly-discovered source of enjoyment, more exquisite than I dreamed the world had in store for me. You have never read this, I am sure, or you would not ask me to resign it. Listen, aunt, to this beautiful passage."

"No, no, child, the chords that once vibrated to the music of poetry are all out of tune. There was a time—but no matter. Look out of the window, Rena. Do you see that tree, near the mill, with a branch on the side, which the lightning has stricken? The green, tender leaves are all stirring and fluttering in the air, but the dry bough moves not. You are the green leaves; I, the withered branch. There is no more use in reading poetry to me now, than for the wind to play about that brown ruin. It is all nonsense, child."

"But you will not lock up the books, aunt. You will not make me so very unhappy."

"It would be the wisest thing I could do. They will fill your head with love-thoughts, and then they will get into your heart. Better off without them."

"No, Aunt Debby," said Rena, "the thoughts are already there, born there, and when I read, they wake, and I wonder how others should think and feel the same. Every sweet strain, every glowing line seems a part of my own being, and a part also of everything sweet and beautiful in nature. So I feel linked with all that is good and fair on earth by a golden chain. Do not laugh at me, aunt. I cannot express my feel-

ings, I know, to make them clear to others, but I feel happier, better, I love every one better, and God more than all."

Aunt Debby looked on Rena's animated and glowing face with mingled compassion and admiration.

"Well, well," said she, patting the warm cheek, "have your own way, and may God keep away the mildew and the frost! But come, I have a present for you. I came to tell you so, but seeing you perched up here in such state, put it all out of my head."

"A present for me! how kind! what can it be?"

"Come and see. You know I promised you one, long ago. You deserve some reward for leaving your pleasant home for mine."

Rena bounded down stairs, after her aunt, wondering what gift awaited her. Aunt Debby led her to the front door, where "all saddled and bridled and fit for a ride," stood a graceful, gentle-looking horse, small enough for a lady's use, and spirited enough for a Diana's. It was as white as milk, with a flowing mane and sweeping tail, and had an "eye like the polar star." The housings of the saddle were red, and its martingale, brilliantly embossed, glittered as it arched its neck, and turned its sleek sides to the sun. Rena clapped her hands with a cry of delight.

"Is that beautiful, beautiful creature for me? all my own, aunt? You don't say so!"

"Yes, all your own, to ride over hill and dale, brook and bridge, only on one condition, that you do not break your neck. I heard you say the other day, you would give all the world for a horse of your own, that you might ride as Di Vernon did. Now you shall not even stay to thank me, but run and put on your riding dress, and try him before the sun goes down. They say he is gentle as a lamb."

"Thank you, not once, but ten thousand times, my own dear aunt!" cried Rena, throwing her arms round her aunt's

neck, and kissing her, as she flew by her, to don her equestrian garments. She had not broken herself of the childish habit of showing her love and gratitude by kissing.

Seldom had Aunt Debby felt more unalloyed satisfaction, than when she saw her niece mounted on the back of the beautiful animal she had given her. It was a pleasant thing to see one so grateful and appreciating ; it was a pleasure to look on her happy face, and buoyant form, as she turned back and smiled, and kissed her hand, at the gate. .

“Ride with your back to the sun, child,” called out Aunt Debby, “and don’t go too fast down hill ; and be sure and not stay out too late,” she called still louder, as the milk-white palfrey bore fleetly away its young and joyous rider.

Rena, who delighted in all out-of-door exercises, learned to ride on horseback, as soon as she could manage to keep her seat in the saddle, or without a saddle, for she did not stop for such a trifle as that. Every horse on the farm had borne her, an impromptu burden, about the fields, through hills of waving corn, rows of potatoes, and ridges of beans. She had ridden behind her father and before him, and cut as many capers on horseback as Wamba in Ivanhoe ; so of course she was mistress of the whip and reins, and bore herself right gallantly on the steed, that seemed proud of its new mistress, and pranced and caracoled with innocent gayety.

Rena did not leave her love-thoughts, as Aunt Debby called them, in the attic. She carried them with her on her lonely ride, and they gave a blandness to the air, and a beauty to the earth and sky, they had never worn before. She would have been perfectly happy, if she had only some one near, to whom she could communicate her joy. She wished her brother was with her, though she was not sure that he cared much about riding on horseback. She thought of Stella, whom she had not seen since her arrival at Sunny Dell, and who she heard was staying at Bellevue. She had also heard that Sherwood

was returned from foreign lands, and she supposed he had become a great gentleman, and forgotten the Snowbird, as he used to call her. She wondered if he admired Stella's beautiful face more now, than when she was six or seven years old. She wondered if he ever rode on horseback, and thought it would be pleasant to meet him, even if he remembered her not. She had been climbing up a long hill, and the silky hair of her palfrey was moist with perspiration.

"I must not weary you, beautiful creature!" said she, riding under the shade of a tree, that bent down over the corner of the fence, where the roads crossed each other, "you shall find me a gentle, loving mistress, and we will share together the sunshine and shade."

The coolness and repose of the shadow was as grateful to her as the animal, for the sultry summer glowed on her cheek, and moistened the locks that shaded her brow.

Dropping the bridle on the neck of the gentle creature, that bent its head to crop the rich grass under its feet, she took off her plumed riding cap and put it on the pommel of the saddle; then shaking her hair loose from the comb that confined it, and suffering the air that came cool and fresh over the hill-tops to play among her tresses, she sat perfectly still, drinking in the wild inspiration of the scene. It happened that another equestrian, just at this time, was slowly sauntering along the crossing road, slackening his pace, from the same cause which induced her to rest beneath the shade. The trees formed a hedge all along his way, opening and making a vista at the corner. Through that vista he carelessly glanced at first, then reining in his horse, drew back a little farther under the shelter of the boughs, and beheld, himself unseen, this young Diana, in her attitude of graceful repose. Rena's own mother had never bestowed much thought on her dress, giving to Henry's the attention that should have been divided between them; but her step-mother, who was a woman of great

taste, fitted up her wardrobe with a liberal hand. Knowing her fondness for riding, she had given her, just before she left home, a beautiful riding dress, not of the most costly materials, but of graceful fashion and becoming hue. It was fortunate for Rena that Sherwood Lindsey should see her each time after an absence of years, under circumstances of peculiar personal advantage. The deep blue colour of her long, flowing skirt was brought out brightly and richly by the snowy whiteness of the horse, and the little straw-hat, shaded by blue feathers (Rena always had a passion for straw-hats), looked as if it could belong to no other head than hers. The glowing brightness of her complexion, the flowing wildness of her hair, the animated expression of her countenance, and the deep repose of her attitude, formed a picture which a painter might have studied with the enthusiasm of his art. Add to these the beautiful surroundings, the canopy of leaves above, whose light festoons mingled with her loosened locks; the green carpet beneath, on which the fetlocks of the palfrey fell like flakes of snow; and high above all the glorious amphitheatre of heaven—it is not strange that Sherwood, though no painter, should have transferred the picture so faithfully to the tablet of his fancy, that it remained there ever afterwards. There is no knowing how long he would have remained gazing through the vista, had he not seen symptoms of a removal on her part. First, she gathered up her long dark hair, and fastening it with the comb she had hung on a little bough overhead, put on the picturesque little page-like hat, took the bridle in one hand, and caressed with the other the mane that flowed beneath. Just as she was about to start anew, he rode rapidly round the corner, and lifting his hat from his head, came directly to the spot where she was.

“Rena—wild gipsy still!” cried he, bending from the saddle to catch the hand she eagerly extended. “When did you light upon these regions? I did not know you were at Sunny

Dell—I did not dream such a pleasure as this awaited me when I left Bellevue.”

“Then you are really glad to see me again?” said she, colouring with delight at this sudden meeting; “I feared you had forgotten me, among all the wonders and grandeurs you have seen. Only think—how long it has been—four years! It seemed an age an hour ago—how little time at this moment!”

“Then you thought of me an hour ago! thank you, Rena! and I assure you my spirit went out to meet you at the self-same minute, and I have been thinking of you ever since. Forgotten you! you would not think so, if you had seen me last night, wandering in the land of dreams, with your scarlet livery round my neck.”

Rena laughed incredulously.

“You remember,” said he, “the trophy I won in the moonlight race! I have kept it as a true and loyal knight, and when I go forth to combat, it shall be the device upon my shield, and the same bright colour shall flame upon my banner.”

“Well, if you are my knight, you can guard me part of my homeward way, while we talk a little of old times. I promised my aunt not to be abroad late, and the sun is not far from the horizon.”

Rena felt perfectly happy, for all that was wanting to fill up the measure of her joy when she left Sunny Dell, was now supplied—a companion—and the one of all others she most wished to see. She did not expect to recognise the gallant boy, the gay collegian, in the handsome, travelled young man at her side. But she did at the first glance—and his manners so frank, cordial, and unaffected—they were just the same—only a little more polished and graceful. She felt just as much at her ease, as when she coasted on his sled down the hill, or skated with him, hand in hand, on her

father's meadow, and she laughed and talked as merrily and self-forgettingly as then.

“What shall I call my beautiful horse?” asked she, when he was admiring its perfections. “You shall name it, if you wish.”

“Call it *Snowbird*,” said he, “in honour of its mistress. That was my pet name for you when I was a college-boy.”

“Call me so still. I like old associations. Give it a classic name.”

“Bucephalus?”

“Oh, no—that is too long, too grand, for my milk-white steed. Some gentle, home-endear'd title.”

“Let it be *Cygnets* then, for gracefully as a swan glides on the water, it floats over the dewy green.”

Rena was about to give her pleased assent to this, when her attention was arrested by the sight of a handsome carriage, drawn by a pair of coal-black horses, and mounted on the box was her old friend Jemmy Bell. Seated within was the dark and handsome man she had seen there years before, perfectly unchanged in appearance, and by his side the delicate lady, but so pale and faded, she would not have known her, save by her former accompaniments. Sherwood, smiling, bowed down to his saddle-bow as he passed, and the pale lady smiled very sweetly on him, though she looked inquiringly at Rena, and the dark eyes of the gentleman were riveted upon her face so intently, they seemed to burn upon her cheek.

“Your father and mother?” said she to Sherwood. “I met them ten years ago, when I was a very little girl, just about this spot. I never forgot your father's face—it haunts me like a dream. It is not changed—it will haunt me still. I never saw so striking a countenance.”

“He was always considered a very handsome man, but it is a brilliant and powerful mind, that gives the fascination whose influence you feel. Oh, Rena, I wish you knew my

mother! She is the gentlest and sweetest of human beings. She is too good, too heavenly for this world."

"It is not likely I ever shall," answered Rena, an expression of sadness stealing over her countenance, "as she and Aunt Debby do not visit each other. She has indeed a heavenly expression."

"You *must* know each other," said Sherwood, earnestly, but thoughtfully. They rode along without speaking, a short time, when Rena suddenly broke the silence, by asking him if Stella was not at Bellevue. The recollection of the exciting scenes in which he had last beheld her, called a high colour to his face, as he answered, that she had been there, but was now with a Mrs. Brown, who lived at some distance from them.

"Is she not very, very beautiful now?" asked Rena, noticing the embarrassment of Sherwood, and feeling a little disconcerted herself.

"Yes, she is certainly remarkably lovely. Poor girl! I pity her—forced to go from dwelling to dwelling, sometimes, I fear, finding few of the comforts and endearments of home."

"I should like to see her—I *must* go to see her," said Rena. "I should like to have her come to Sunny Dell. But whose pretty cottage is this, so neat and cosy?"

"See if you do not recollect the ruddy-cheeked woman, churning in that little porch. I am sure *I* never shall forget her."

"Hannah! it's our own Hannah! Let us stop and see her I knew she was married to Jemmy Bell, but I did not know that she lived here."

They stopped at once before the wicket gate, and Rena sprang from the horse before Sherwood had hardly dismounted from his and gathering up her long riding-skirt, she ran through the yard, caught Hannah's hand away from the churn-dash, and pressed it heartily in her own. Hannah's

sight was at first dazzled by the bright face and blue feathers, but the smile and the voice reassured her, and she knew it was her little favourite who was greeting her so cordially. Hannah had always held a high standing in Rena's estimation, since she had rescued Sherwood from death with her dauntless arm—an act which had been signally rewarded. Though Mr. Lindsey's first bounty was rejected, he was not discouraged from renewing the offer. Upon her marriage, after the faithful courtship of six years, with Jemmy Bell, who still retained his office of coachman, he had presented her the neat little cottage Rena so much admired, where Hannah manufactured all the butter and cheese used at Bellevue.

“And are these little rosy-faced, fat things yours?” asked Rena in astonishment, looking at two little new beings, one vigorously plying the churn-dash while it sat in its mother's lap, the other rolling about on the grass, kicking up its chubby feet and crowing with all its might.

“Yes, Miss Rena, they are both mine; and there's only a year's difference between them,” said Hannah, exhibiting them with as much pride as the mother of the Gracchi. “That little fellow rolling on the grass I've named after Master Sherwood. Sherwood Lindsey Bell is a name that will tell one of these days.”

Rena burst into a gay laugh, as she looked from the fat live dumpling so loftily christened, to the tall, proud-looking young man whose name he bore. “I wanted to call my little girl after you, Miss Repa, but its father *would* have it Hannah.” Here Hannah, junior, gave such a lusty pull at the churn-dash that the cream splattered in far-spreading rings, that came very near spoiling Rena's blue riding dress.

“I declare, Miss Rena,” continued Hannah, giving her one of her honest, cordial, approving smiles, “you have grown so fine and young-lady-like I didn't know you at first, but when

you come near one, you've got the same natural, child-like sort of look. Have you seen Golden Pippin lately?"

"Hannah!" exclaimed Rena, rebukingly.

"Well, Stella, then—I don't mean any harm, but old names will stick to one, anyhow."

"No," said Rena; "but it is getting late, and I must bid you good-bye now, Hannah—you must come and see me, and bring *his* namesake that is, and mine that was to be."

Hannah shook her head. "I don't visit there now. Your Aunt Debby didn't like my marrying Mr. Bell,—though she made me a great many handsome presents, and behaved like a lady as she is. But I don't go anywhere where they don't make my husband welcome, and that's the reason I stay away."

Rena promised to perform a double portion of visiting under these circumstances, and hurried away, pleased with this specimen of rural felicity.

She began to feel a little uneasy at the prospect of incurring her aunt's displeasure by seeing her return in company with Sherwood Lindsey. She did not like to brave her anger when she had just given her such a proof of liberality and kindness; nor did she suppose Sherwood himself would like to expose himself to the scornful reception she had once before given him. With characteristic frankness she said, before they came within sight of Sunny Dell—

"You will leave me here, Sherwood—I cannot call you Mr. Lindsey."

"No, for Heaven's sake, don't! But why must I leave you here?"

"I cannot allow you, for *my* sake, to go where you would not for your own."

"I have sworn to be your knight, and I should be a craven one, indeed, if I did not see my lady fair safe within her castle gates."

“But you know Aunt Debby—”

“Yes, I know she is no friend of mine; but I want most especially to win her right good will. The dragon that guarded the bowers of Hesperides would not prevent me, now, from coming to Sunny Dell!”

“Don’t compare Aunt Debby to a dragon, Sherwood. She is too good and kind for that. You have no idea how much heart she has.”

“Show me the way to it, and no Persian devotee ever paid more lowly reverence to the rising sun, than will I to the presiding genius of Sunny Dell.”

The music of the cascade now murmured in their ears. They crossed the bridge and soon reached Aunt Debby’s gate. She stood in the door-way, watching for the return of her niece, for the sun was only a golden hemisphere, and twilight was leaning from the hills.

“Is that your aunt?” said Sherwood, tracing but little resemblance in the figure before him, to the *grenadier*, whom he had once defied.

“Yes,” replied Rena, feeling more trepidation than she was willing he should observe, in prospect of her aunt’s displeasure. Sherwood assisted her to dismount, and led her up the steps, with as much ease and grace, as if he were assured of a most cordial welcome. He no longer doubted the identity of the lady, for well did he remember the lightning glance that flashed upon him in boyhood, and which had lost nothing of its scorching fire.

“Mr. Sherwood Lindsey, aunt,” said Rena, in a deprecating tone.

“And what brings Mr. Sherwood Lindsey here, where he knows he is an unwelcome guest? Sir, I never desire one that bears your name to cross my threshold, or sit down under my roof.”

“Madam,” answered Sherwood, proudly, but respectfully,

“I met your niece, and presumed on the freedom of old acquaintanceship, to escort her home. I knew I had prejudices to encounter, but trusted that time had softened them, and that I had power to remove them, as far as it regards myself. I rely upon your courtesy as a lady, to allow me to visit here, as a friend of Rena, if not of your own.”

“Young man,” said Aunt Debby, moved in spite of herself by his frank and manly bearing, “I do not wish to be unkind and turn you from my door, but once again I say, that not till morn and midnight meet, shall niece of mine, with my permission, associate with a son of the Hon. Herbert Lindsey. I said so ten years ago, I say so now, I will say it to my dying day.”

“And *I* say,” cried Rena, excited beyond the power of self-control, “that it is harsh, and cruel, and unjust, to visit on the son a father’s errors, whatever they may have been. *I* say it is unworthy of you, Aunt Debby; and when your dying day comes, you will be sorry enough for the bitter spirit that moves you now.”

Taking off her hat, for the strings seemed to tighten under her chin and cut her swelling veins, she fanned with the feathers her burning cheeks.

“Rena, go to your room,” cried Aunt Debby, pale with anger. It was seldom indeed she turned pale, and when she did, it was not the white flag of peace coming over her cheeks.

“No,” exclaimed Sherwood, “I will no longer expose her to your displeasure by my presence, but thank Heaven the world is wide, and your dominion extends not beyond those green fields and that bounding stream. Farewell, Rena, if you have one kind feeling for your early friend, cherish it till we meet again.”

Taking her hand, and pressing it right before her aunt’s face, as if in scorn of her threats, he gave the latter a triumphant smile, and passing through the gate, mounted his horse and

galloped across the lawn. Rena's eyes followed him till he disappeared, then she listened to the horse's hoofs trampling over the bridge, and then to the water dashing over the mill-dam. The beating of her own heart sounded as loud to her as the tic-tac of the mill, and her rebel passions were dashing against her heart like those foaming waters.

"How long are you going to stand there, looking after that young man, miss?" said her aunt. "How long must supper wait your pleasure, miss?"

"I don't want any supper," cried Rena, passionately, and sweeping her skirt over her arm, she flew up stairs, cast her hat upon the first chair she saw, threw herself upon the bed and buried her face in her hands. It would be difficult to tell which she hated most at that moment, herself, Aunt Debby, or the world; that world which had appeared to her so full of beauty and happiness, when she went out in the sunshine, on her milk-white Cygnet. There she lay at least two hours, for daylight had faded into twilight, and twilight deepened into the rich darkness of starry night, and still she was alone, with her cheek pressed upon the pillow, all wet with tears.

At length the door opened and some one entered. She knew Aunt Debby's step, which slowly approached the bed, but she did not speak or move.

"Are you asleep, Rena?" said her aunt, bending over her. The tone of her voice, though grave, was not harsh. It was even sorrowful, and Rena, subdued at once, meekly answered she was not asleep.

"I am sorry," said Aunt Debby, sitting down by the bedside, "I am sorry all this has happened, child. It can't be helped now; but I would give half of what I am worth to feel as I did when I stood watching you, till you were out of sight, this afternoon."

"So would I too, aunt," sobbed Rena. There was no light in the room—none without, save here and there a starry gleam,

that did not penetrate the curtained window. Aunt Debby had been sitting in darkness in her own room, preparing herself for the task she believed it her duty to perform. In darkness she came to fulfil it.

“Rena,” said she, “I cannot bear that you should think me harsh, cruel, and unjust, without a cause. It is strange that one who has lived so long independent of the opinion of the world, should make her happiness depend upon that of a child; but it is even so. I have another motive too, urging me to what I am about to do. Let the history of *my* youth be a beacon to yours. You need one, child, for your passions are strong and may drive you against shoals, of whose existence you little dream. Rena, will you listen to me?”

“Listen!” she exclaimed, sitting up and pushing her dishevelled locks behind her ears—“oh, yes, dear aunt. I have been afraid to ask you; yet there is nothing I have so longed to know as the story of your early life.”

“If you expect any stirring events,” said the aunt, “any startling incidents, you will be disappointed. It is a history of the *heart*. Yes, cold and hard as I now seem, the morning dream of my heart was love—and once I thought that dream was realized. I have been sitting in the solitude of my room two long hours, composing my thoughts, so as to avoid all unnecessary sentiment and display. I do not wish to excite your feelings. I only wish you to know why I do not wish the son of Herbert Lindsey to throw his shadow across *my* threshold or *your* destiny.

“When I was a young girl, you may have heard your father speak of the lonely situation we occupied, on a farm, quite aloof from any town—quite an unusual thing in the heart of New England. My father was devoted to his farm, my mother to her domestic pursuits; so I grew up amid my own wild fancies in unchecked luxuriance, and never perhaps did a human being feel a more exulting principle in her bosom

than glowed in mine. I felt no sympathy with any one around me. I was all-sufficient in myself and by myself for happiness. My mother tried to bring me down to a daily routine of duties, but at last gave up in despair. My father used to reason with me, but he might as well have reasoned with the lightning. I had a passionate thirst for knowledge, with but little to satisfy it. They sent me to the country schools, but I could no more sit still six hours a day, on high-backed benches, without speaking or looking out of the window, conning over lessons, to recite by rote like a parrot, than I could turn my blood into ice and my heart into stone. I was always violating rules, always incurring the severest punishments, often sent home in disgrace; but home I never went. I used to ramble out in the fields, and climb the rocks and ford the streams, wondering if God had given one creature power to tyrannize over the freeborn soul of another. If He had, I determined to rebel against it, and I did, till I became the terror of the teachers, and the reproach of the neighbourhood.

“My brother, your father, Rena, lived at this time with an uncle, who resided in a large town, celebrated for the excellence of its schools. He had taken my brother home with him, that he might have the benefit of these schools; and learning from him my wild and undisciplined state, the good man came and urged my parents to send me to a Female Academy established near his own residence, where I could be in his own family, and enjoy those advantages of education I so much needed. The superior character of this institution imposed a restraint on my hitherto lawless disposition, and the love of knowledge, till then unfed, enabled me to bear with more decorum the rigid discipline to which I was compelled to submit. All this time, Rena, the principle of *love* had never been called into exercise, that lever which could have moved my stubborn will, though in the hands of a feeble child. I wish, if possible, to give you some idea of the ele-

ments that composed my character, that you may comprehend the nature of that influence which soon brought all those elements into vassalage. I was a strange, wild, wilful girl, with a will of iron, but a heart of wax. It was the strong will they tried to bend;—they sought not to impress the yielding heart. I remained with my uncle two years, and it was said the savage was tamed. The last Sunday of my stay there, a stranger entered the church, long after the service commenced; and now, Rena, begins what I promised to relate. Every eye was turned towards his advancing figure. You have seen him in the meridian of his manhood. What he was in its morning you may imagine from his son, only more brilliant, more striking. There was a kind of radiant darkness about his face, a mixture of beauty and grandeur, like the glory of night. The eyes of the stranger wandered about the church, when I felt they rested on me. I felt it by the sudden thrill that ran through every fibre of my being. You have been told that I was once handsome. Whether I was or not, there was something that attracted and riveted his attention during the remainder of the solemn services, that induced him to trace my homeward footsteps, so as to ascertain my dwelling-place. The next day I met him in my walks. He spoke without an introduction, for he saw I was one who would set at defiance all conventional rules. He was young, but had already seen much of the world—I, nothing. I can give you no idea of the fascination of his manners,—that is a power that must be felt, not described. I remained only a week longer at my uncle's, but I met him every day, and lived more in that one short week than the whole seventeen years of my previous existence. Ah! child, child, when I look back to this period of my life, and think how my heart then gushed forth in one warm, living current, to meet his, and feel it as hard and cold as it now is, I can compare it to nothing but the burning lava of the fire-mountain, all

cooled and hardened into stone. (You must not wonder at my language. Passion always abounds in metaphors, and as I call up the visions of my youth, it rises from its ashes and glows with something of its wonted heat.

“I returned home. He followed me into the obscurity of my native wilds. There, amidst the green solitudes, he wandered with me, and talked of nothing but love. He read me poems that breathed of nothing but love—yes! that very poem I saw you poring over to-day, till your brain seemed on fire, he read to me, with his voice of music, when there was no other sound heard but the beating of our own hearts. My parents were proud of the conquest their wild girl had made, and my former companions looked upon me with outward respect, but secret envy. Months passed, but still he lingered; but at length we parted, solemnly pledged to each other, heart and soul, for life or death, time and eternity. He was to go to England with his father, who he assured me would not oppose our union, and in one year would return to claim me as his wife. Well, Rena, child, have you fallen asleep?”

“Asleep! no indeed, dear aunt. Please go on, I could listen for ever,” cried Rena, drawing a deep inspiration, and pressing her aunt’s hand, with unconscious sympathy.

“The year passed away,” resumed Aunt Debby, “that long, long year. At first letters came, frequent and long. And such letters, I wish you could have read them, but I have burned them all.”

“I wish so, too,” cried Rena, ardently.

“A pen of fire—a heart of ice—strange union, child! He returned to his native country. He came to my rustic home. I thought he was changed, cold, abstracted; but I said to myself, that it was because *my* love had grown deeper, warmer, broader in absence—that I was changed, not he. Well! the wedding-day was appointed, and wedding preparations going bravely, nobly on. Long webs of linen were bleaching in the

sunshine, brilliant patch-work counterpanes were stretched out on the frames, my mother was busy putting daisy tufts on the snowy dimity, everything that could be done for a farmer's only daughter was doing for me ; me, who was doing nothing for myself, but dreaming of a future, that it seemed to me angels might envy. I am trying to put off the dark hour, but it came. Yes, the wedding-day came, and I had on my bridal dress. The letter I expected had not arrived, but that of course miscarried. He was on his way, and the bride must be ready. The minister was there, looking kind and solemn. The guests came in one after another. The odour of the warm cake mingled with the perfume of the flowers. Everything was ready, but the bridegroom. I sat waiting, looking down upon my white dress, till I thought it turned into a shroud. Then I looked at the guests, and they were all funeral watchers, assembled round the dead. The flowers smelt like grave-flowers, and they were—the grave-flowers of my earthly happiness. The *bridegroom never came*. We thought him sick, dead, anything, everything but *false*. I was carried that night cold and fainting to my chamber. The next day a burning fever was in my veins, but that was nothing. After a while a newspaper came—Heaven knows who sent it—and there, in letters of fire that burned into my brain, I saw his marriage to another. I will not pain you by dwelling on what followed. I went through a baptism of fire, but it did not purify, it only hardened my nature. Had I been one of the gentle spirits, my heart would have broken, but mine did not break. It seemed as hard as the nether millstone. My friends talked of revenge, but I disdained the thought. My father threatened a suit for breach of promise. I would have died sooner than have submitted to such a disgrace. As if *money* could atone for blighted youth, extinguished, hope and betrayed love. As if *money* could pay for the heart's blood. No ! I made my father and brother vow that they would make no attempt to avenge my

wrongs. Beyond my own little neighbourhood, their story was not known, and I would not have them blazoned to the world. I told you I had an iron will, and all bent to its sway. *His* name was never mentioned, all traces of his existence were swept away from our home; all but the deep scars, hardening over the heart's wound. Years rolled on. My father became infirm and poor; his vigorous arm could no longer toil for his support; my brother was married, and was toiling to sustain his own family. Mr. Wright, the owner of this large and beautiful farm, a man of property and influence, visited us, and sought me for his wife. I married him, because my father was poor, and he urged me to provide a home for myself. I married, too, because I would not that *he* should say, I lived an old maid for his sake. It was a sin and a shame that I did so, for there was not one spark of love in my being then. He brought me and made me the mistress of Sunny Dell, and I, who had led a wild, dreamy life, transformed myself into a busy, bustling, managing housekeeper. I did not love him, but I worked for him with an energy that surprised myself. I was afraid to sit down and fold my hands, lest I should think of the past, and perhaps go mad. I rose before it was light, and set my household to work, and my husband praised me as a jewel of a wife, but I could not sleep, and the strong energies of my character must have an object. But I have not told you yet, child,—I do believe you are asleep. Never mind, don't squeeze my hand off. I have not told you that *he* dwelt near us, my husband's political and legal foe, dwelt in wealth and pride and honour, looking down upon his neighbours as no better than his menials. You know the fact already, however; you know the lord of Bellevue. I was walking with my husband, when I met him face to face, with his fair and beautiful wife. I did not turn my head or slacken my pace. I looked at him for one moment steadfastly, and all my wrongs came rustling up from the depths of my heart, as from a boiling

cauldron. They burst through the ice-crust that covered them, and came scalding and burning into my face. He averted his eyes, that proud, false man, as if an evil spirit crossed his path,—I know I must have looked like one. His wife clung closer to his arm, and shrunk from me in terror. I laughed after they passed by. It was near this very mountain, and the echoes mocked me.

My husband died. I was left a rich widow, with no child to open a love-fount in my dry heart. Your father urged me to visit him, and told me of your mother's feeble health. I have nothing more to tell; I told you it was nothing but the history of a heart. Yes! even as a little child I learned to love you, Rena—better than I thought I should ever love a human being; and lately, you have brought back to me some of the softness and freshness of my youth. You have *womanized* me, Rena; for I was hard and masculine, and tried to forget my sex, which I hated and loathed. Now, tell me, if you think I can ever welcome one of that accursed—”

“Oh! aunt, dear aunt, stop!” exclaimed Rena, putting her hand suddenly over her aunt's lips, while she threw the other arm caressingly round her neck; “As you believe in God and a pardoning Saviour, you must not utter such dreadful words!”

“It is because I am tempted to say such dreadful things, that I never can forgive,” cried Aunt Debby, seizing the hand that sealed her lips, and pressing her throbbing temples against it. “It is because he has changed me into a being I myself abhor. Had he but told me that he loved another, frankly and honestly, I would have released and forgiven him. I always did wonder what he could see in me to love, all glorious as he was, and is still. I could have forgiven and loved him still—and even now, in spite of my hatred, my scorn, and the bitter memory of my wrongs, there are moments when I love him still.”

Aunt Debby bent her head down upon her knees, and, as she rocked backwards and forwards, Rena heard deep, suffocating sobs labouring in her breast.

“Don’t weep so, aunt, I cannot bear to hear you. You will break my heart, Aunt Debby!” cried she, winding her arms around her and laying her soft cheek against hers.

“Never let me have cause to weep for you, Rena,” said she, slowly lifting her head, as if it were a leaden weight, and leaning it against the pillow. “As is the father, so may the son be. Beware of the race! they have the guile of the serpent and the sting of the adder.”

CHAPTER X.

“I pray thee let me weep to-night!

’Tis rarely I am weeping;

My tears are buried in my heart,

Like cave-locked fountains sleeping.

I cannot bear to think of this;

Oh! leave me to my weeping;

A few tears for that grave, my heart,

Where hope in Death is sleeping.”

L. E. L.

RENA, who was a morning lark, rising before the sun, and, like the bird that gathers the dew-drops on its wings, greeting his coming with the glad music of her song, slept till her chamber was all bathed in sunshine. Aunt Debby would not have her disturbed. She went in herself, with soft step, and drew the curtains, so that her slumbers might be prolonged—observing with tenderness and compassion the pale cheeks of the young girl, and the shadow that rested heavily on her brow.

There was a deeper shadow on her heart. The knowledge

of man's treachery and falsehood, brought in such close and startling relation to herself, loosened her confidence in all that was good and fair. Never more could she have that undoubting faith, that beautiful trust in virtue and truth, that child-like simplicity, which, like a crystal rill flowing through her heart, had diffused an atmosphere of purity and freshness around her. She had tasted of the tree of good and evil—and could no more dwell in the Eden, over whose blossoms the trail of the serpent had passed.

So she thought, when she sat down at the breakfast table at the side of her aunt, who seemed now invested with a kind of mysterious charm. She scanned her features, trying to discover the traces of that beauty, which had so powerfully attracted the young and dazzling stranger; of that sensibility, which, the preceding night, had burst forth in impassioned tears and rending sighs; of that love, whose divine spark neither wrongs nor Time had utterly extinguished. But Aunt Debby, as if ashamed of the emotions she had exhibited, had encased herself again in her armour, which, like the shell of the tortoise, covered every vulnerable part.

Days passed away—the name of Lindsey was not mentioned, the milk-white Cygnet was not summoned by its young mistress, who stole away to her lonely attic and her gray old Sachem, finding new fascination in the wizard works of genius and passion. But she was feeding, as Aunt Debby had said, the wild-fire within, which stole for its fuel some of the roses from her cheeks. Aunt Debby noticed, without commentary, their paler hue, and ordering Cygnet to be saddled, insisted upon her riding abroad.

“You wanted to see Stella,” said she; “go and find her. You know where the Widow Brown lives, just beyond Walnut Hill. It will be a pleasant ride for you. If you choose, you can ask her to visit you, though I don't like the girl and never did. I would not treat her unkindly, but I would not

wish to see you sleeping on the same pillow; as you did when children. Your heart is pure, child, now; keep it from contamination."

Rena did not look back and smile, with a face of living sunshine, as she did, when last she rode from the gate; but she felt grateful to her aunt for not commanding her to avoid Sherwood, if she should chance to meet him. It implied a confidence in her, which she resolved should not be misplaced. At first she rode slowly and pensively along, the bridle hanging so loosely in her hand, that Cygnet, attracted by some tufts of fragrant clover that sprang up by the way-side, stopped leisurely to regale himself, supposing he had been taken out for his own amusement.

"Ah! Cygnet!" cried she, "this will never do—" and touching his flanks lightly with her whip, he sprang forward with a bound, that would have thrown a less practised rider from the saddle. She was soon winding round the brow of the hill, under the foliage of the walnut trees. There was a path, right across the woods, and she turned in that direction, her spirits already exhilarated and her eye brightened.

Suddenly, in a bend of the path, she met Sherwood Lindsey. He was on foot, and his hands were filled with clusters of mountain ivy, whose waxen flowers, and dark, glabrous leaves, form such a beautiful contrast. She started, and coloured with surprise and pleasure.

"Rena, alone!" he exclaimed; "whither are you bound?"

"To Stella," she murmured, a constraint she had never felt before in Sherwood's presence chilling her manner. He missed the beautiful sunburst of delight that illumined her face when he last met her, and could well divine the cause. His anger was kindled, not against her, but the one whose unjustifiable prejudices, as he supposed, were raising barriers to his will. Rena had scarcely ever seen him with a stationary cloud on his brow. Even in the midst of her aunt's

indignation and scorn, a smile had played upon his lip, expressive of conscious power. Now she remembered what Aunt Debby had said of the radiant darkness of his father's face, and she saw it reflected on his own. Her words, too—"Beware of the race—they have the guile of the serpent, and the sting of the adder!"—rang in her ears. She did not, could not believe them as applied to Sherwood, but she wished she had never heard them.

"Rena," said he, "I have been rambling about the woods, day after day, in the hope of meeting you. It is not the dread of your aunt's displeasure that prevents me from seeking you at Sunny Dell, but I cannot expose *you* to her anger."

"You are right, Sherwood. It would make me very unhappy if I thought you would ever attempt to come there again."

"Then I must see you elsewhere, Rena. The green woods and open plains are left us. Close by, where I have been gathering these wild flowers, there is a rock half cushioned with moss and supported by a gray old oak, where you can sit enthroned, the queen of the woods. Come, will you not dismount and trust yourself with me a few moments, where the withering glance of your aunt cannot reach us?"

A short time before, she would have leaped from her saddle and enthroned herself on that rock with the wild freedom of a child; but now, with a burning cheek and averted eye, she told him she declined the honours of royalty.

"Have you promised your aunt that you would not speak to me, look at me?" cried he, impetuously. "Surely you have not bound yourself, heart and soul, to her prejudices—yielding up that noble independence of character I have always admired and honoured, too, in one so young—you have not done this, Rena?"

"You do *me* justice, Sherwood, but not my *aunt*. She has required no such promise, but I will not abuse her confi-

dence, and willingly do what I know would give her distress and anxiety. You must not blame her too much. If you only knew the wrongs, the provocation—”

She stopped, remembering that it was Sherwood's father who had inflicted these wrongs, regretting that she had alluded to them.

“Then you give me up at once, without a struggle or a pang!” said he, with bitterness. “You bend to the will of a tyrannical woman, who has no right under heaven to control you, unless your own free will gives it to her. You care not for the friend of your childhood!”

“Yes, I do care, Sherwood,” she answered, her eyes filling with tears and her lips quivering; “you know I do. It is not kind to speak to me in this way, when I have felt so unhappy, when I still feel so, when I always expect to feel so!”

“Forgive me, Rena—I am unkind—I see I am wrong. I wonder I could have been such a monster as to cause this tear to flow!” There was one and then another sparkling on Cygnet's downy neck. The head of Rena was bent, and her blue feathers shaded her face.

“Come, beautiful Snowbird!” said he, taking her hand, with the same smile that beamed upon her, when, panting from the race, she looked up into the wintry night and met its warmth and brightness and beauty—“come, beautiful Snowbird! light upon that mossy seat, and fold your wings but a few moments there.”

“No, no,” cried Rena, dashing away the tear that still trembled in her eye, and resuming her usual frankness of manner. “My wings were plumed for a flight beyond this hill, and I may not rest them here. Have you no message for Stella? Or is it from her you have just come?”

“No. There is a prohibition barring that region too. Really, I must be a dangerous individual, enclosed on every side with gates of brass and triple steel.”

“Strange !” repeated Rena. “I thought she was with your mother very lately. Did she not—was she not—” She paused in confusion, hardly knowing herself what she was going to say. Sherwood, who thought it would be ungenerous to Stella to mention the cause of her banishment from his own home, and that it would bring out his father’s pride of character in too strong relief, sought to change the subject ; and Rena, finding it easier to go than she did a few moments before, drew up Cygnet’s fringed neck and said that she ought, she must, and would go. Sherwood, who had been adorning Cygnet’s white forehead with the mountain ivy, in vain opposed her departure. She was ashamed of herself for having lingered so long.

“I shall waylay you on your return,” said he. “I am become the bandit of the woods, a second Robin Hood, for your sake.”

“Do not stop me again. Let me return with an unburdened conscience. Force me not to add to the cares of one who has suffered too much already. I shall not always stay with Aunt Debby. The world, as you say, is very wide, and my own father’s doors will never be shut against you.”

“Stop, Rena ! one moment ! At Hannah’s cottage we might sometimes meet. Surely there would be no impropriety in that. My own mother has not a truer sense of right and wrong than that heroic woman.”

“Yes—Hannah is a noble woman indeed. I always loved Hannah. I cannot promise—that would not be right. If I did, I could not say to Aunt Debby I went to Hannah’s cottage and *happened* to meet Sherwood Lindsey there. Good-bye. Cygnet, let us go.”

Away she flew, but as soon as she was out of sight of Sherwood, she stole one of the wild flowers from her palfrey’s head and hid it in her bosom.

“Not care !” murmured she. “Ah ! I wish I were a little

girl again, playing among the haymakers on my father's farm. I was so much happier then ! I never wanted to be a young lady. I would give all the world to be the child I was, when Sherwood bore me like a feather on his arm, or when we played snowballs together under the sycamore's leafless boughs. We certainly grow sad as we grow old."

Thus meditating on the increasing cares of life, the experienced maiden of sixteen approached the dwelling of Mrs. Brown, the present guardian of Stella. It was situated far from the road, as solitary country houses usually are, a plain, old-fashioned building, with no pretensions to elegance ; but wearing an air of comfort and respectability. Stella was sitting at the open window, busily sewing (Mrs. Brown did not allow her to eat the bread of idleness), with an expression of weariness and discontent on her fair features. She looked up from her work as Cygnet's light hoofs brushed over the grass, and wondered what blue-robed sylph was floating along on a white cloud, for Cygnet's motion was as graceful and soft as a rolling cloud. It was long since she had seen Rena, and the fashion of the dress makes a wondrous difference in the human form. But when she rode right up to the window and she saw her eyes and smile, she recognised her with a pang of envy Rena little dreamed of implanting.

"I did not know you at first in that fine dress, and on that fine horse," said Stella, when Rena, who had disencumbered herself of her riding skirt and hat, was sitting quietly by her side and gazing earnestly in her face—that face which Sherwood had truly said was so beautiful.

"Oh ! don't call me fine, Stella ; you know I don't care how I look. My step-mother gave me the dress, my aunt the horse ; is it not a beautiful creature ?"

"Yes ! how happy you must be to have such kind friends !"

"*You* are happy too, Stella, are you not ? You have friends who are kind ! surely no one could be unkind to *you*."

All her early admiration of Stella's beauty revived in her presence, and glowed with deeper enthusiasm. She could scarcely forbear telling her, as she did when a child, how sweet and lovely she was. She owed nothing to the adornments of dress, for Mrs. Brown would not allow her to wear at home, the garments Mrs. Lindsey had given her, on the plea of their being too *ladyfied* for a charity girl. A plain calico frock was her only decoration, or rather the only one to which she was indebted to art; for over this, sweeping below her beautiful shoulders and slender waist, fell her magnificent ringlets of darkened gold—for the blonde hue of childhood was now enriched by a shade of sunny brown.

Rena could not help saying, "how beautiful!" while she dipped her fingers in the golden eddies. "Don't you remember, Stella, when we were little girls, how we used to separate the stems of the dandelions with pins, and dropping them in water, watch them turn into beautiful ringlets; and how I used to put them on my head and try to make it look like yours!"

Stella took but little interest in these childish reminiscences. Young as she was in years, she was prematurely old in heart; the simplicity of childhood had no charm for her. She could not understand the freshness and artlessness of Rena's character. Ever associating with her the idea of Sherwood Lindsey, she longed to know if she had seen, as a young man, the gallant boy they had both so much admired. She introduced the subject then uppermost in Rena's thoughts as well as her own, but in so artful a manner, that Rena could not suppose she had any connexion with the subject in her mind.

"You asked me if I were happy, Rena! how can I be, when I compare the home I have just left with the one I now inhabit?"

"You were happy at Mrs. Lindsey's, then?" Rena was vexed with herself for the deep blush that dyed her cheeks, at this simple remark.

“Oh yes! how could I be otherwise? No mother could be kinder or more tender than Mrs. Lindsey, no brother more affectionate or devoted than Sherwood. If you knew them, as I do, you would not wonder that I cannot be reconciled to my present situation. You did know Sherwood as a boy, Rena!”

“I know him now,” replied she, with deep self-aborrence. She envied Stella for having shared the home of Sherwood, and she loathed herself for the feeling.

“Do you see him often?” asked Stella with a deep sigh. “If so, you are indeed to be envied.”

“My aunt, you know, does not wish to have any intercourse with the family, and, of course, my opportunities of seeing him must be very few. Is not his father a very proud man?”

“Proud!” exclaimed Stella, writhing from the remembrance of his scorn. “Proud—no, he is more—he is pride itself. He is afraid the poor charity girl will charm the heart of his son, and, if he could, he would bury her six feet deep under ground. I hate him—oh! how I hate him! I don’t know which would confer the greatest joy, the love of Sherwood, for its own sake, or because, if secured, it would be a revenge upon his haughty father.”

“Oh! Stella, how can you associate revenge with love? how can you cherish such dark thoughts? Do you think if Sherwood knew them—”

“That he could love me?” cried Stella, recalled to a sense of her imprudence, by the recoiling expression of Rena’s countenance. “No! in his presence none but gentle and loving thoughts can exist. He is all that is excellent, noble, and charming. He shielded me from his father’s anger. He rushed after me into the storm, for I was flying in desperation from his door, and brought me back, encircled by his protecting arm. He told me to call upon him in the hour of danger and distress, and that I should find relief and comfort. Can I think of this and not love him? You, Rena, who have

been nursed by fond parents and caressed by tender relatives and friends, from your very infancy, know not what the feelings of the poor and despised are !”

Artfully had she woven these facts together, for Sherwood had done all this ; and could Rena have witnessed the scene, she would have admired with all her soul his noble chivalry, and understood all the feelings that inspired him. Far different impressions were made by Stella’s words ; and with a sickening sensation of disappointment and distrust in all human truth and virtue, she listened, unconscious that the star-eyed girl was reading, but too faithfully, her pale and varying countenance.

“And now, Rena,” added Stella, rising and putting back the rich waves of her hair, so that her face was completely unveiled, “look at me. You have often told me I was beautiful—and so have others. Tell me, with your own truth-telling lips, if you were Sherwood Lindsey, could you love me, poor and unfriended as I am ?”

“I could, Stella !” burst spontaneously from those ‘truth-telling lips ;’ “your poverty and loneliness would be but stronger claims upon my affection, as I doubt not they are on his. But oh ! Stella, you would not be loved for a beautiful face alone ! you would not seek to inspire such love ! your heart would ask for something more !”

“If heaven has seen fit to give me nothing but beauty, surely I ought to prize it. I do not see why the love founded on such a gift should not be as dear as any other. They talk a great deal about talents and virtue, as if they were meritorious qualities, but they are gifts too. If I had been born rich, I should have been amiable ; all my wishes would have been granted, and I would have been contented and grateful. I did not make myself poor ! I did not throw myself into an almshouse. You do not blame me for that ?”

“How strangely you talk, Stella ! I cannot follow your reasoning.”

"I am not trying to reason, I am only expressing thoughts I do not like to hear one speak of beauty as of no value, and as if one was to blame for possessing it."

"You do not understand me, Stella. I never meant to depreciate beauty! I love it! I love to gaze upon it. But you know *that* may change, while the heart and soul is still the same. When I look in the glass, it does not seem as if it were myself I see reflected there. It is something that thinks, that feels, that burns within me, and that I know will for ever think and burn, that is my own self—and for which only I would be loved."

The light came back, bright and fervent, to Rena's eye and cheek. She pressed her hands on her bosom, for that something which thinks, and feels, and burns, had never throbbed and glowed so powerfully as at this moment. She was right, when she said it was not herself that she saw reflected in the mirror. The still form and passive features defined on the cold glass, were so different from the same lineaments resplendent with intellect and glowing with feeling. Stella, vain as she was, felt that there was a charm, a witchery about Rena, of which she herself was perfectly unconscious, and she rejoiced in the wisdom of Aunt Debby, who still kept alive the ancient feud between the families of Sunny Dell and Bellevue.

"You must come and see me," said Rena, preparing to depart; "Aunt Debby told me to ask you."

"Mrs. Brown keeps me so tight at the needle I have hardly time to breathe the fresh air. I am thankful, however, she wants me to sew, as it saves me from any house-drudgery. It is hard to stay here, after living at Bellevue. There I used to gather flowers for Mrs. Lindsey, and place them under Sherwood's picture,—read aloud to her, ride with her, or sit on the piazza, by Sherwood's side, under the sweet honeysuckles that twined the pillars. Here it is work, work—scold, scold, from morning till night."

‘How long will you remain here?’ asked Rena, thinking the change must be a grievous one.

‘I don’t know. Till another mistress is set over me, I suppose,’ answered she, her lip curling with disdain. ‘When the time comes that I am my own mistress I shall know how to reign—I have had lessons enough, and I know them all by heart.’

Mrs. Brown, who had been from home, came in just as Rena was going out, who wondered not at Stella’s discontent when she looked at her hard, coarse features and heard her voice, which, though she evidently tried to soften, had a harsh and grating sound. She put on a courteous simper as soon as she saw Rena, but glanced out of the corner of her eye at Stella’s work, to see if she had dared to be idle while entertaining her guest.

‘I have finished it,’ said Stella, coldly.

‘Never mind—O, la! I wasn’t thinking of such a thing. Won’t the young lady take off her things and stay to supper?’

Rena declined the invitation and left the house, burdened with messages to Aunt Debby, for as soon as Mrs. Brown discovered who she was she overwhelmed her with civilities and expressions of respect to her aunt, whose name was known far and wide. Stella followed her into the yard, where Cygnet, like a docile child, waited her coming.

‘Stella!’ shouted the rough voice of Mrs. Brown from the window, ‘come and get a chair for the young lady to get on her horse. I’m ashamed of you, for not thinking of it yourself.’

‘No, no,’ said Rena, springing up on the saddle lightly as a bird. ‘Stella knows that I need no aid.’

Then taking the wreath from Cygnet’s brow, she handed the wild-flowers to Stella.

‘Thank you, Rena, but I don’t care anything about flowers—I never did.’

‘I thought you just said how you loved to gather flowers for Mrs. Lindsey, and put them about—about her pictures.’

‘So I did, but not for the sake of the flowers.’

‘Strange girl!’ thought Rena, riding slowly down the yard. ‘Poor girl!’ thought she, when she heard Mrs. Brown calling to her from the top of her lungs before she had time to enter the house.

When Rena reached the path through the woods, she looked round in terror lest Sherwood should be waiting her there. Seeing another that diverged in a different direction, she turned rapidly into it. She would not have met him for worlds, in her present state of feeling. She had convinced herself that he loved Stella, and that it was natural and noble and generous in him to do so,—that the interest he had manifested in herself was nothing more than gay gallantry, mixed with brotherly kindness,—that she had no right to reproach and accuse him of treachery and deceit, as she did in her heart when Stella dwelt so eloquently on his devotion to her. She tried to think that the pain she felt was caused by her fears that Stella was not altogether worthy of his love—that she could not appreciate the best and loftiest traits of his character—that, as she had recklessly declared, beauty was her chief excellence.

The air was as pure and elastic as when she left home, but to her it seemed oppressive and hard to breathe. There was a tightness about her lungs; they had not room to heave.

‘Oh! I know what it is,’ said she, drawing from her bosom the flower she had placed there. ‘These leaves hurt me!’ The warmth of her heart had faded the petals, and a brown shade already stained its waxen hue. She was about to cast it from her, but a second thought restrained her. It was restored to its hiding-place, to mingle its languid fragrance with the wilted blossoms of hope!

That night, when she read a chapter from the Bible aloud

to her aunt, as she always did before retiring to bed, she selected one from the book of Ecclesiastes, and repeated:—

“Vanity of vanities,” saith the Preacher, “all is vanity and vexation of spirit,” with so much feeling and expression, Aunt Debby could not help noticing it.

“I hope,” said she, when Rena closed the book, “I hope, child, it will be long before you realize the truth of those sentiments.”

“I do now, aunt,” replied she, with the pensiveness and gravity of a young preacher, “it seems to me, there is very little happiness in the world after all. It is only children who are really happy.”

“You are nothing but a child yourself, little moralist; you have hardly begun to live. Don’t become prematurely wise. I love your bright, glad spirit; it fills the house with sunshine, and makes music all the day long. It has half cured me of misanthropy. You must not let me turn you into a mope.”

“No, aunt, it is not you; sad thoughts will come sometimes, without any one’s bidding. When my mother died, I prayed that I might not live to see another dear one laid away in the cold ground, that I might die before my father, who could not mourn for me, as I would for him—and if I were good and holy enough to dwell in the kingdom of heaven, I would rather die now, young as I am, than live to see all the bright dreams of life pass away, leaving me dark and cold.”

“I wish I had not told her,” murmured Aunt Debby to herself, looking anxiously and tenderly on the young moralist; “I wish I had not told her.”

“You say right, aunt,” said Rena, looking up, with a sweet smile, though her eyes were filled with tears, “I am nothing but a child, a foolish child. I dare say, I shall feel bright and happy to-morrow; but let me lay my head in your lap now, dear aunt, for it aches.”

Rena complaining of the headache! It was as strange as to hear a bird complain of the sore-throat. Aunt Debby was alarmed. She insisted upon having some sage or balm tea made, and prescribed a thousand remedies, all of which Rena strenuously refused.

"Then lie still, child," said she, smoothing softly the dark hair that lay loosely on her temples; "you have been riding too far in the warm sun."

She continued to smooth down the silken folds, as she would a young kitten nestling in her lap, till she knew, by her quiet, gentle, regular breathing, she was asleep. She sat, till her limbs ached, from remaining so long in one position, till her own eyes were heavy with slumber, but she would not move, lest she should wake the sleeping girl. Surely the fountain of tenderness was not all dried in Aunt Debby's heart.



CHAPTER XI.

'A stranger among strange faces, she drinketh the wormwood of dependence;

She is marked as a child of want—and the world hateth poverty;
She is cared for by none—and earth and her God seemeth to forsake her."

PROVERBIAL PHILOSOPHY.

"I've wandered east—I've wandered west—

Through many a weary way;

But never, never could forget

The time of life's young day."

MOTHERWELL. ♦

STELLA told Rena, that "if she had been born rich, she would have been amiable," but she was mistaken. The archangelic sins of pride and ambition would have produced anarchy and discontent in her bosom, even if it were mantled in purple and fine linen. She said she would have been *grate-*

ful, but it was not so. She had been taken from the dregs of poverty, the abode of pauperism, fed, clothed, and generally kindly treated, while other poor children were left in the almshouse unnoticed, and unknown—and yet she was not grateful. She was beautiful and fair to look upon, young, healthy, and elastic; the free air of heaven was hers, the green earth and glorious skies, the common heritage of God to man—and yet she was not grateful. She had truly said, “she did not love flowers.” Volumes with regard to her character were expressed in that simple phrase. Not love flowers! Those rainbows of earth, gilt with the seven-fold beams of heaven, proclaiming the covenant mercy of God, his tenderness and love, those smiles of creation so bright and radiant, gladdening the waste places of Nature, and making the wilderness rejoice, those unfallen children of Paradise, whose pure and fragrant breath distils balm into the sin-sick and weary heart, and fills it with innocent and holy thoughts.

Even as we write, there steals upon our spirit a sweet, delicious odour, exhaled from a cluster of violets, placed in the centre of the table, and the whole apartment is perfumed with their aroma. It is a modest, little flower, boasting no glowing tint, or gorgeous dye, yet had God created no other blossom than this, breathed no other fragrance on the air than its exquisite perfume, we should still have an impression of beauty and grace and love unspeakable, a token of goodness celestial, of mercy divine. Not love flowers! Alas for the young heart that conceives a sentiment like this!

Stella was more thoroughly miserable than she had ever been before. To live with Mrs. Brown after being cherished in the home of Mrs. Lindsey, was like exchanging a couch of down for a bed of burrs. The hope that sustained her, when she first felt the discomforts of her situation, began to grow faint, for Sherwood had never sought her, and vainly had she wandered abroad at the twilight hour, in the expectation of

meeting him. Had she then made no impression on his heart and imagination, or had his haughty and imperious father more power over him, than a young girl in the dazzling beauty of her youth? or had another already thrown her fascinations round him, and made him regardless of her own? Long had she looked forward to Sherwood's return, as an era that was to brighten her destiny, that was to bring before her an object worthy of attraction, one who would raise her to the rank she was born to adorn, who would be at once her monarch and her slave. All she desired was an occasion, to appear before him in the splendour of her girlhood, certain that to be seen, was to conquer. For this, she had woven a web of stratagem, curious and subtle, which for a while promised triumphant success, but had resulted in blank disappointment. Mrs. Lindsey had called once to see her and brought her many presents, such as she believed would be most acceptable, and such as few had the means of bestowing; but though Stella professed unbounded gratitude, she felt none in her heart, as long as the gift of her son was withheld. It is true she was not suffered to enjoy the possession of these tokens of kindness and taste; for if she put on an additional ornament to her dress, Mrs. Brown would taunt her with her poverty, and the necessity of conforming in appearance to her situation.

It was the evening of Rena's visit to her, that she took her accustomed twilight walk. The house was so remote from others, and so surrounded by woods, one could ramble about its environs with as much freedom as if they lived in a wilderness. Mrs. Brown always encouraged her to exercise at this hour, because the rays began to be too indistinct for her to sew, and she did not like to waste candles, by lighting them too early. Long, and mild, and beautiful are the twilights of northern latitudes; and had Stella, when released by the task-mistress she detested, opened her heart to the sweet influ

ence of nature, as the flower-cups, to receive the falling dew, she would have felt her parched and weary spirit strengthened and refreshed. She wandered along the skirt of the wood, forming wild plans of escape from her present situation, so irksome and galling. Sometimes she thought she would run away and travel on foot to the metropolis of the state, begging by day, and if denied shelter at night, sleeping under the shadow of some granite wall, or some way-side tree. Some rich gentleman might take pity on her and adopt her, for all rich gentlemen were not haughty and cruel like Mr. Lindsey. Sometimes wrought up to madness by the recollection of the proud Senator's stinging scorn, she would turn, where his turreted roof cast an ash-coloured shade on the sky, and resolve to steal in the darkness of night, through those tall poplars, and kindle with incendiary hand the stately pile, which would then become the grave of pride and the altar of revenge. This evening one reflection cheered her in her solitude; it was that she had planted a sting in the bosom of Renā, keen as any she herself endured. Little did Sherwood think, when, after lingering in vain for Rena, and turning his course homeward, he suddenly met the young charity girl, and saw the crimson cloud so beautifully suffuse her cheek, and the joy that irradiated her whole face, that such evil thoughts ever found admission in her youthful breast.

His first sensation was pleasure, and he stopped to express it; his next, pain and mortification, for he remembered his promise to his father, and as there was no danger to avert, no protection to be claimed, he felt constrained to pass on with a silent bow.

"Mr. Lindsey," cried Stella, in a soft, low voice, "surely you are not too proud to speak to one to whom your mother has been so kind?"

Thus addressed, he could not, without a rudeness, of which he would not be guilty, avoid speaking. There was something,

too, so sad and dejected in her countenance, so plaintive in her tone, he thought he was a savage to treat her with neglect.

"No, Stella," said he, "I am not governed by pride; but you well know, that I am not master of my own actions, as far as it regards yourself. You have not forgotten the distressing scenes at our house, from the shock of which my mother has not yet recovered. To avoid a repetition of the same, disgraceful and harrowing as they are, I have bound myself by a promise, which I cannot, in honour, break. If I could, Stella, I would gladly show all the kindness of a brother and the sympathy of a friend. You know I would; but a promise is a sacred thing. Farewell."

Again he bowed and was turning hastily away, when Stella, in desperation, on seeing the opportunity for which she had been panting, thus eluding her grasp, sprang forward and laid her hand, with an imploring gesture, on his arm.

"Alas!" she cried, "I have no friend to aid me, and I am so wretched, so very miserable. I did hope that I might look to you for consolation, for where else can I turn?"

"What can I do for you?" said he, alarmed by her uncontrollable agitation. "Is there any cause of misery which I can remove? any evil impending that I can avert? Speak, and tell me why you are so wretched."

"I am wretched for the want of sympathy! wretched because there are none but hard eyes to look at me, harsh voices to speak to me. After listening to your mother's sweet voice, to your kind and gentle accents, the coarse words of Mrs. Brown are wormwood and gall to my spirit. You don't know what such things are! you don't know how bitter is the bread of dependence!"

"I know your lot is a hard one, Stella, and would to Heaven I could relieve it. But I am not the only one from whom you hear kind and gentle accents. There is one who sought

you to-day, whose heart is full of warm and generous feelings. Surely you found a balm in *her* sympathy and friendship."

Stella, who was still clinging to his arm and looking beseechingly in his face, could not but see its deepening colour through the twilight's shade, while he made this allusion to Rena. He had seen her too, known her purpose, and yet Rena mentioned it not. Could she have devised any method by which she could have depreciated Rena, without incurring the suspicion of slander, envy, or jealousy, she would gladly have done it; but there was something about Sherwood that acted as a counter-charm against duplicity and malice. As on his brow "shame was ashamed to sit," so in his presence the malignant passions hid themselves, and often remained in a state of suspended animation. Once before Stella had felt this magic influence; and now, as then, a vague longing for a purer and better nature, a desire to possess his esteem and tenderness, rather than his love, a wish that he were her brother and that she were worthy of such a blessing, stole like a silver edging on the murky clouds of evil that were rolling over her soul. Perhaps, if Mr. Lindsey had not driven her from his home, if he had not placed his ban upon all intercourse with his son, this influence might have become deep and abiding; these angel moments might have grown into hours, till her spirit acquired a habit of purity and goodness, instead of the faint and transient impulses that now moved it.

The shadows of twilight grew darker, and they walked along the skirt of the wood towards Mrs. Brown's. They reached the gate, where Sherwood paused and said—

"Once more, let me urge you, Stella, to confide and trust in Rena. She will give you sympathy and kindness far more precious than I can impart. Even if my father had not exacted from me the solemn promise that prevents me from being a free agent, my visits would expose you to censorious remark. When I again leave home, my mother can perhaps extend to

you the kindness and protection I know she longs to bestow. I must be a very formidable personage. The sooner I go the better."

"Are you going away again?" asked Stella, sadly.

"Why, when a young man has received his diploma, and had a year's finishing in foreign lands, it is time for him to look abroad for that one spot on the broad earth, which Providence has appointed for his field of labour. I must have something better to do than gathering wild-flowers in Robin Hood's bower."

Stella remembered the wild-flowers she had rejected from the hand of Rena.

"I suspect there are some of your flowers,"—her evil genius prompted her to say—"lying in our yard. Rena threw them there a short time since. I did not know whose hand had culled them, or they would have had *value* in my eyes. Ah! Sherwood Lindsey, if Rena cares so little for your gifts as to cast them from her in disdain, do you think her heart is so overflowing with sympathy as to pour balm on mine?"

A strong desire to test the truth of her words induced Sherwood to open the gate and accompany Stella to the door. He had been drawn into a partial violation of his word, and a few steps more would not add to his father's displeasure or his own self-reproach. On the dewy grass lay the waxen blossoms in their wreath of dazzling green, and he knew they had been torn from Cygnet's milk-white brow and cast unvalued there. Had he known that Rena had been excited by Stella's artful representations to an act of girlish pique, that she still wore one of those flowers pressed against a wounded heart, he would have forgiven the apparent slight—he would have rejoiced in this proof of his power. But now, he could not help contrasting the eagerness with which Stella gathered the discarded blossoms, with Rena's cold disdain; and he believed the heart of the wild Snowbird was as cold as the ice that seemed her

native element. To this comparison Stella was indebted for an affectionate, lingering adieu, and she entered the house with triumph glittering in her eyes. She expected a scolding from Mrs. Brown for staying out so late, and for allowing a young gentleman to accompany her home; but fortunately for her, the good lady was busy in the kitchen, and did not see her return. She flew up stairs into her little room, the most ill-furnished and uncomfortable one the house contained, and adorned her mantel-piece with the clustering ivy. She *did not love flowers*; but these had belonged to Sherwood, had been given to Rena (and well did she understand the feeling that led her to scatter them on the ground), and now they were a badge of triumph to her, an omen of future success. With a light step she ran to assist Mrs. Brown, who, observing her heightened colour and brightened countenance, and the alacrity with which she moved, asserted "that nothing did a young girl so much good as to keep her steady all day, and let her run about a little just before dark. *She* knew how to bring them up—there was no dispute about that."

Sherwood, whose character was clear as crystal, loathed the thought of a clandestine action. He could not bear to remain where he might constantly be exposed to influences unfavourable to ingenuousness and integrity of purpose. He told his father his determination to go at once to the metropolis, and commence the study of that profession which had made the name he had the honour of bearing so distinguished.

"You are right, my son. For your mother's sake I did not like to shorten your holidays, but I rejoice that you are willing to do it yourself. Inaction would produce rust on the bright steel of your spirit. It must clash against other blades, and sparks of fire will be elicited by the collision. Sherwood, I have no doubt of your success in life; I have followed with pride your boyish career; I have seen you bearing away the highest collegiate honours, laurels on which no moral blight has fallen,

I have confidence in your talents, confidence in your principles ; I feel that I have a son who will sustain the honour of my name and fame, when I shall be no more."

"Talk not so, my father ; you look very nearly as young as I do, and when I shall have attained the maturity of manhood, you will still be wearing only the green palm of age."

"My life will not be a protracted one. I have lived too fast, my son, to live very long. Like the flame fed by oxygen, my spirit burns too intensely for the blaze to continue. I wonder there are no wrinkles on my brow, no furrows on my cheeks. I should think my face would be marked by lines of premature age, but I suppose there is such a thing as a subterranean ploughshare, which leaves the surface smooth, while it cuts deep and rough within."

Sherwood looked on the marble smoothness of his father's brow, round which his unblanched ebon locks richly waved, and thought it a tablet of strength on which long years might be written ; but there was a light in his eye, which seemed like that of a distant lamp, burning in those subterranean regions, where the ploughshare of thought was making its invisible furrows,—a consuming lustre that must exhaust too rapidly the oil of life.

"When you too leave home, sir," said Sherwood, resolved to urge the claims of the poor charity girl on his mother's protection, "my mother will be alone. Let me entreat you then, sir, to allow her the solace her kind heart craves. Let her recall the poor girl who has been banished on my account, and you will rejoice in the consciousness of gratified benevolence."

Mr. Lindsey's smooth brow darkened instantaneously.

"Sherwood, what is this girl to you ? I thought you understood me too well ever to mention her name again."

"She is bound to me by the common interests of humanity," answered the young man, undauntedly ; "and I am not ashamed to advocate her rights. If my mother takes a maternal interest

in her desolate lot, if she herself would be cheered in her loneliness by this exercise of kindness, and if I, who am the cause of her expulsion, am no longer near to terrify and endanger, or to be endangered, I dare to say, sir, that it is your duty as a husband, as a man, and as a Christian, to gratify my mother's wishes and permit her to shelter this neglected and unfriended girl."

As Mr. Lindsey listened to his son, thus openly and nobly pleading in behalf of deserted and innocent orphanage, remorse for his own unprincipled conduct wrung him, for a moment, with bitter agony. He saw that the interest Sherwood manifested was pure, manly benevolence. No latent passion burned in his eye, or glowed in his cheek. But to have Stella an inmate of his household!—it was impossible.

"Say no more, Sherwood—stop at the limits of a son's respect. The girl shall be cared for. She shall not suffer want while I live. If this promise does not satisfy your benevolence, I shall believe you are inspired by a deeper interest—yes! in spite of the blue-robed girl on the milk-white horse."

Sherwood turned away vexed and discontented by this allusion to Rena. His father, who, it may be recollected, had met him when riding with Rena on horseback, and who had been exceedingly struck by her appearance, failed not to question him closely with regard to her name and lineage. When told she was a niece of Aunt Debby, alias Mrs. Wright, he seemed almost as much annoyed as by the proximity of the charity girl. Sherwood frankly told him the summary manner in which he had been dismissed from the house, and his astonishment at the bitter feelings that the mistress of Sunny Dell cherished for the master of Bellevue.

"Never expose yourself to a similar insult," said Mr. Lindsey. "This girl is no companion for you, either. A poor farmer's daughter, probably brought up in ignorance, and accustomed only to the drudgery of a kitchen."

Sherwood's eyes flashed fire. "You saw her, father—you know she is no kitchen drudge. Neither is her father a *poor* farmer! He is as true and perfect a gentleman as ever walked the earth—one of the independent princes of our land. Brought up in ignorance! your own son cannot read Virgil with more fluency than his daughter; and her knowledge of English is equal to her proficiency in the classics of Greece. Really, father," continued he, with increasing vehemence, "I wonder whom you *do* think worthy to associate with your honourable son? I have no royal diadem, no ducal crown upon my brows, that I should scorn the free-born daughters of my country in this manner!"

"You disappoint me, Sherwood. You told me, not long ago, that you had too much of your father's pride of character to form associations with those of inferior rank."

"I said of low birth and doubtful lineage; and I say so still. I *have* a great deal of pride—a pride that, I hope, will always keep me from a mean and unworthy act. But Colonel Fay is a man as much honoured and respected in his immediate circle, as you are in yours. He has the polish of a gentleman as well as the noble spirit of a man—a Cincinnatus, who, if called from the plough, could preside with dignity over a nation's weal!"

This conversation occurred the evening after his ride with Rena, and till this moment there had been no illusion to the subject. The sarcastic curl of his father's lip displeased him, and so had Rena displeased him. He did not like to speak of her, and he rejoiced that the entrance of his mother interrupted the interview with his father.

Several times had Sherwood called at Hannah's cottage, in the vague hope of meeting Rena, for his displeasure could not exist long, awakened by so slight a cause. He had not given her the flowers as a token of remembrance, he had only decorated her *horse* with them. He recalled, too, her words and looks,

so full of sensibility, and memory justified his early favourite. As the time drew near for his departure, he felt that he could not go without bidding her farewell. Again he turned his steps to the dairy-woman's cottage, and learned, with bitter disappointment, that Rena had just been there and gone.

"Perhaps she will return this way," said Hannah, "for she did not take the road back to Sunny Dell. If she does I will call her in. She went to visit a poor sick woman, yonder."

"She will not come in if she sees me, so it will do no good. If Aunt Debby were a man, I would go and fight my way across the threshold—but a woman, and such a woman! If Rena were surrounded by a chain of fiery serpents, she could not be more effectually guarded. Hannah, you were once my guardian angel,—devise some plan by which I can see her, without shocking her sense of propriety, and I will worship you as a tutelary divinity."

"Now, Master Sherwood, you had better keep your college learning for her, and talk plain English to me. I will ask her to come any time you please to mention, without telling her it is you who want to see her, and I know she will do it, she is so obliging and sweet-tempered. She looked sort of sober to-day, quiet, a dove-like kind of way, not natural to her. I would not give one of *her*, for fifty thousand Golden Pippins, for all her beauty."

"Who do you mean by Golden Pippin, Hannah,—Stella?"

"Yes, Master Sherwood, I called her so when she was six years old, and I can't get out of the habit."

Then Hannah related the history of the Golden Pippins, in her graphic way, and many other little anecdotes of her childhood, which did not redound much to her praise.

"Then Rena was always kind to Stella?" he asked, delighted to draw out the warm-hearted dairy-woman, on a subject in which he felt so deep an interest.

"Yes, that she was; many's the scolding she got from Aunt

Debby on her account, because she would not leave her in disgrace. She always helped her out in her tasks, and shared everything she had in the world with her, which is more than Stella would do with any one. Now, I never did despise any one because they are poor, Master Sherwood ; I am poor myself, and I haven't got any book learning, but I can see into a person as straight as anybody, and I never did like that charity girl, any way you can fix it ; she's deceitful as an adder and as cunning as a fox ; I tried to tell Miss Rena so, but she put her own sweet hand right on my lips, and would not let me say one word to her disparagement."

Had Hannah been gifted with the eloquence of a Demosthenes, she could not have found a more attentive or admiring auditor. Sherwood, who refused a seat, had thrown himself carelessly down on the clover that carpeted the yard, by the side of his chubby namesake, who seemed literally to live in clover, while his mother attended to her household duties. The duty to which she was now devoting herself, while she entertained Sherwood with incidents connected with Rena's juvenile years, was working over some rich golden butter in a wooden tray as white as milk. There was a nice whitewashed stoup, extending forward from the roof, that excluded the rays of the western sun, and beneath this shelter Hannah carried on many of the mysteries of her dairy, in a more public manner than is usually done. She could enjoy the benefit of the fresh air, see what was going on in the world, and above all, watch her children as they played on the grass, among the pink-headed clover and golden buttercups. In her neat checked apron, her sleeves rolled up above her plump elbows, her cheeks as ruddy as a damask rose, Hannah was a noble representative of the female peasantry of her northern clime. With a small wooden paddle she toiled over the yellow mass, till every drop of buttermilk dripped out, then moulding it into immense biscuits, she stamped them vigorously with her practised hand, leaving

beautiful impressions of lilies and roses and sweet-smelling posies, doomed to be as evanescent as the flowers whose similitude they assumed. While the industrious, smiling, and handsome matron, worked and spat and stamped her butter, Sherwood senior looked up from his rich clover bed, reclining his aristocratic-looking head on his left elbow, while he pulled buttercups with his right hand and tossed over the curly white head of Sherwood junior, who held out his little fat hands, and seemed boisterously delighted with the honours showered upon him. It was not a very dignified position for the son of the Hon. Mr. Lindsey, but he loved to enact the boy again, and probably enjoyed more his green embroidered couch and leafy canopy, than the elegant sofas in his mother's drawing-room.

"Ah! Master Sherwood," said the delighted mother, "you ought to have seen Miss Rena pet that child. I do believe she loves it on account of its name. The way she kissed it you never did see!"

"Did she?" said Sherwood, laughing and blushing like a girl. Then catching the little urchin in his arms, he did what young men seldom do to little boys, however young—kissed its rosy cheeks with hearty good-will. It was at this auspicious moment that Rena, who had been to visit a sick woman in the neighbourhood, was passing the cottage. She was on foot—a little willow basket, now empty, but lately filled with delicacies for an invalid, hung upon her arm. A simple muslin sun-bonnet covered her head, instead of the blue-plumed riding hat. She looked exactly like a young school-girl returning with a somewhat weary step from conning her daily tasks. She was weary, for she had taken a long walk, and her spirit wanted the lightness which gives elasticity to every step. Hannah stepped nimbly to the gate, her hand all the time grasping a golden ball, which Rena might have supposed she intended throwing at her head had she been of a pugnacious disposition, so sudden and unexpected was the movement

“Come in, Miss Rena,” cried she, “and take a glass of cool water, right from the well. You look tired, and well you may, for it is no laughing matter to walk where you have been.”

“Thank you, Hannah—I had better not—I am only a little warm.” She took off her sun-bonnet, and her hair, to which the heat had given a kind of wave, fell loose and dark over her shoulders. It was a pity she ever put it up with a comb—this wild, floating way of wearing it became her so much. It was well that she had lost her comb while she was walking, since Sherwood saw her through his clover curtain, and wondered how any one could think Stella more lovely than Rena. He had intended to remain concealed till Hannah had induced her to enter; but anything like deception was so foreign to his nature he sprang from his recumbent attitude, making his namesake turn an involuntary somerset, to his own great astonishment, and greeted her at the gate with something of the gay freedom of his boyhood. Hannah had carried him back so vividly to old times, he almost forgot they were not both children. Rena, who had been meditating in her lonely walk, a pensive moralist, on the vanity of all earthly things; who was thinking the world was getting cold and dark, in spite of the bright sun that was gilding the sky; felt a genial warmth pervading her inmost heart as Sherwood’s sunny smile beamed so unexpectedly upon her. She forgot the impression Stella’s artful words had left upon her mind—she forgot Aunt Debby’s solemn warning, and with a look so radiant and joyous that Sherwood thought he saw again the “sprite, gipsy, snowbird,” of the scarlet tiara. She suffered herself to be led into the porch, and then, she hardly knew how, into the garden, where Jemmy had constructed a pleasant little arbour, and trained over the lattice-work a grape vine of unexampled luxuriance.

Jemmy Bell’s garden was a perfect horticultural gem. Not a weed defaced the smooth, square-cut, parsley-margined beds,

where long, regular rows of vegetables, in beautiful and well-ordered families, grew side by side. There was the beet, with its red-veined, richly variegated leaves, and crimson roots, half-hoisting from the soil, the rich-orange-coloured carrot and parsnip, with luxuriant, green tufts. Then there was the melon patch, and the cucumber patch, the vines surrounded by slender hoops, over which they wantoned, and curled, and mingled their tendrils in spite of all restraint. Along the fence, which divided it from the barn-yard, savoury herbs and medicinal shrubs appeared in harmonious brotherhood. This part of the garden was Hannah's peculiar province, and through its instrumentality, she became a benefactress to the whole neighbourhood. Did any feverish sufferer sigh for a decoction of soothing balm, Hannah always had some of the leaves dried and preserved ready for relief. Did any anxious housewife experience a dearth of sage, in the time of pork-killing and sausage meat, Hannah always had a supply of the odoriferous seasoning. She had chamomile, wormwood, and rue for tonics, tansy for poultices, and peppermint and catnip for little babies. Nor was she without her floral ornaments, for Hannah loved flowers, though Stella did not. Directly under her windows, beyond a line of sweet-scented lilacs, there was a large circle, divided into various parts, by flowers geometrically arranged, though Hannah was no pupil of Euclid.

The equator was represented by a row of yellow marigolds, the axis by the deep blue larkspur, and variegated touch-me-not. Parallels of latitude were marked by sweet-williams and pansies, division of longitude by pinks, daisies, and bachelor's buttons, and right in the centre of this magnificent, flowery globe, a cluster of tall sun-flowers turned their golden fore-neads, and bowed their adoring heads to the day-god, whose glorious name they bore. On a rustic seat, in the vine-covered arbour erected on the borders of this domestic paradise,

Sherwood and Rena sat. So suddenly had she been transported there, without any apparent volition of her own, she might have believed it the transition of a dream, had not the warm touch of life from the hand of Sherwood, in which her own was still clasped, assured her that she was not in an ideal world. She felt too, as she looked into the luminous darkness of his eyes, that he was one of

“earth’s impassioned sons,
As warm in love, as fierce in ire,
As the best heart whose current runs,
Full of the day-god’s living fire.”

These lines recurred to her, from the matchless poem she had just been reading, and all the poetry of her nature stirred within her. Again, as in her lonely attic, her spirit seemed a weird-lyre, and the voice of Sherwood breathing over it, waked music from every chord. The little pond that gleamed like a silver cup, in the neighbouring field, was converted into Oman’s sea, the homely vegetables into Oriental blossoms, the arbour in which she sat into Hinda’s latticed bower, and she herself into “El Hassan’s blooming child.” Sherwood ought to have addressed her in the language of poetry, but though his countenance glowed with its inspiration, it was simple prose that flowed from his lips.

“I am going away, Rena. In a few days I shall leave home, to commence my career as a man. I am going to the metropolis, where my father was born, to adopt his profession, and if possible adorn it as he has done. I could not go without seeing you again, without seeing you alone, without—” He hesitated, and Rena’s fluttering heart beat loud and fast. To hear of his intended departure grieved her, but the unfinished sentence gave her a glimpse of happiness, which that fluttering heart was scarcely large enough to hold.

“Speak, Rena,” continued he, “and utter the words that lie upon my stammering tongue.”

“How can I, when I know them not?”

“Nay, Rena, dear, ingenuous Rena, you do know them. You have divined them. You do know that I love you, but you can never know how tenderly, entirely, and passionately I love you, for words cannot express it. Words! cold and vain symbols! Heart only can speak to heart—lip alone to lip.”

And suiting the action to the words, he drew her irresistibly closer and closer to him, and her bashful lips trembled under the bold eloquence of his.

“And now, Rena,” said he, “you are mine—I feel it, without one verbal promise, in every fibre of my being! I kissed you when you were a little child, and I fled from Aunt Debby’s lightning eyes. Again, in a victorious hour, I dared to press the kiss of triumph on your glowing cheek. And now, by this first kiss of acknowledged love, I pledge myself to you, Rena, body and soul, heart and life, in the bonds of an everlasting covenant!”

Rena could not speak—her young heart was brimming with happiness too full for language. Aunt Debby might threaten and warn, Mr. Lindsey frown and forbid, Stella’s syren tongue bring false witness, but Sherwood, whom she had always loved,—the dauntless boy, the fascinating youth, the noble, high-principled young man,—Sherwood loved her, and if all future time were dark, and every moment fraught with anguish, this single hour of felicity was sufficient to balance an age of wo! All at once she thought of her father, and her own extreme youth.

“My father, Sherwood!—what would he say?”

“He would say—‘God bless my wild Snowbird—she has built her nest in a warm, true heart!’”

“But Aunt Debby—”

“She is a woman, after all, and has a heart—she will relent.”

“Yes!—she has a warm, excellent heart. She loves me, and would not like to see me miserable. But your own father, Sherwood!—oh! I fear him—I dread him!”

“My father!” repeated Sherwood, and a cloud came over his face. He had forgotten the Hon. Mr. Lindsey in the excitement of the moment, and the contemptuous manner in which he had spoken of the farmer’s daughter. “My father is a man somewhat to be dreaded. I cannot conceal from you that he will oppose my wishes; but I am now of age, by the laws of my country, and though I might sacrifice my own happiness through filial reverence, I never will yours. Yes! my father has the pride of a demi-god, and if he knew of any feminine angels, he would certainly woo one by proxy for my bride. No mere mortal maiden would fill the measure of his ambition. But fear him not, Rena; he too has a heart, and loves me far more than I merit. You do not dread my mother?”

“Oh, no!—she looks too sweet, too heavenly, to inspire any feeling except love. But Stella!”

“And what of Stella! Surely you are not in awe of her?”

“I thought from all she said,—but perhaps I misunderstood her—that you felt an interest in her, so strong, so tender, that she would look upon me as a rival, if she knew what had passed even now.”

Rena’s beautiful velvet eyes were fixed anxiously, not doubtingly, on Sherwood, waiting his reply.

“I fear that girl is false, and I grieve for the fear. I did feel a strong interest in her peculiar situation, and as I knew I had been the indirect cause of suffering to her I felt more deeply on that account. But you, Rena, could not for a moment believe that after knowing *you* I could have ever loved Stella?”

“She is so beautiful!—ten thousand times more beautiful than I.”

“I see that she is beautiful—I *feel* you to be so. To me there is the difference of phosphorus and lightning—the dazzling polar regions and the rich, warm, glowing tropics.”

“That will do, Sherwood. If you like me better than Stella, I would not exchange with her, were she an angel of light! But indeed I always thought myself ugly.”

Sherwood laughed at the truthful earnestness with which she uttered these words. Could she have seen herself at this moment, bathed in the roseate light of love and hope and joy, she must have withdrawn the self-applied epithet. How long she sat there listening to Sherwood’s low, melodious voice, the air whispering through the vine-wreaths, lifting here and there a light leaf, to let a slender sunbeam through, and the shadows occasionally creeping through the lattice-work and playing on her dress, she never knew. She must have forgotten that she had to walk to Sunny Dell. She did not notice that the sun, the great Reaper, was gathering his golden sheafs in the garner of the west.

In the mean time some counter influences were approaching, as unwelcome as unexpected. It chanced that the Senator was riding out that very afternoon on horseback; not that there was anything unusual in that, but it happened that one of the shoes of his horse became loose, and he stopped at the gate to leave word for Jemmy Bell to come and take the animal to the blacksmith. While giving the dairy-woman the message for her husband, his eye was attracted by the antics of the child in the clover-bed, who was drumming on a hat, which he was certain belonged to no one but Sherwood. A pair of gloves, too, lay on the grass, of whose identity he was equally sure.

“Is my son here?” he asked of Hannah, who, conscious that Sherwood would not like to be interrupted, and least of all by his father, and who always felt disconcerted in the presence of the haughty Senator, stammered and blushed, and said she believed he was.

“Where is he?”

“I don’t know exactly, sir, I’ll go and see,” and dropping her butter paddle, she walked so rapidly into the garden, that

Mr. Lindsey's suspicions were roused, and dismounting, he threw the bridle over a post, opened the gate, stepped over the wondering baby, and taking an oblique direction, entered the garden by a side gate, and encountered Hannah face to face, just before she reached the arbour. Waving her back with an imperious gesture, he took about three strides across the soft grass, and stood right in the green arch, formed by the meeting tendrils of the vine. Rena felt the shadow falling upon them, and looking up beheld the stately form and haunting face of Mr. Lindsey. Starting upon her feet with an irrepressible exclamation, Sherwood started up also, and met his father's dark and penetrating glance. No frown contracted his marble brow, but he knew his father, and saw that the subterranean fires were glowing within the crater of his breast. Determined to meet the exigency of the moment, with the best grace he could command, he took Rena's shrinking hand, and leading her forward several paces, introduced her as the daughter of Colonel Fay, "a gentleman," he added, "to whose hospitality, you are aware, sir, I was once much indebted."

Though Mr Lindsey was excessively angry with his son for scorning his advice, and braving his authority, with respect to the farmer's daughter, he nevertheless felt an unspeakable relief, when he discovered that Stella was not his companion in the lonely arbour. The only notice he condescended to take of the introduction was a cold and distant bow, for which haughty courtesy, Rena was constrained to be very grateful, as she had probably wrought herself up to the expectation of seeing a naked scimitar flashing over her head, or perhaps a bowl of poison presented to her lips, or some such dire alternative, such a dark, fearful picture had she formed of Sherwood's father, the perjured lover of Aunt Debby's youth.

"Sherwood, follow me," said his father; "I am in haste, and require your company."

It was a pity he had not softened the authority of his

manner. It was a pity, too, that he used the word *require* instead of *desire*, for Sherwood, though he disdained the pride of wealth and rank, had a spirit indomitable as his own, that rebelled against coercion, and what he deemed the unjust exercise of power. Still he knew the respect due to a father, and curbing the feelings that dictated a different reply,

“I *will* follow you, sir,” said he, “but if your business is not too pressing, I should like to accompany this young lady part of her homeward way. It is getting late, and she has far to walk.”

“You should have considered that before detaining her here, for I cannot brook delay.”

“Indeed,” interrupted Rena, “I would much prefer returning alone; I do not wish any companion; and I know Aunt Debby—” She stopped, her earnestness had carried her too far. It seemed almost sacrilege to mention the name of her injured aunt before the betrayer of her heart.

It is strange! Rena had never been thought to resemble her aunt; but Mr. Lindsey, who well remembered her bright and blooming youth, traced a striking similitude to her in the countenance of her niece. He had known her when love and passion had lent their shifting rays to the large, dark iris of her eyes, their light and shade to the mutable roses of her cheek. As he looked on this young girl, already under the influence of that monarch passion, which stamps all future life with weal or woe, and knew that his own son had awakened its power—that *other self of his*, which oftentimes haunted him like an unlaid ghost, whispered in his ear, that here might be another victim—that years hence she, too, might become a cold petrification like her aunt, or a withered, blighted blossom, like one, once fair, and innocent, and loving as herself, and sink into an unknown and dishonoured grave.

“You have sacrificed *your* youth on the altar of unhallowed passion,” continued the phantom-self; “your manhood to the

Moloch of ambition. You have offered as burnt-offerings to your idol divinities truth, honour, and justice, and the god of this world has accepted the flaming holocaust. But let your son, if he choose, bow down to another shrine. Bid him not bend the knee to Baal, when his soul pays homage to the God of nature and of love. Oh! cold and hard of heart yourself, chill not, harden not, by selfish policy and worldly wisdom, the young, warm, and panting hearts before you."

Thus whispered the accusing, warning phantom, while Rena thrilled under the fascination of his gaze. The moment, however, he turned his glare upon his son, she felt it was her duty to withdraw, so that her presence need offer no obstacle to Sherwood's obedience to his father. It required some resolution to pass so near that proud form as she must do to find egress through the leafy arch; but what she thought right she never lacked courage to perform.

"Will you permit me to pass, sir?" she asked, pushing aside the leaves, like the drapery of a curtain, so as to widen the passage. Gliding through, without suffering the folds of her dress to come in contact with him, and casting back on Sherwood a glance, that needed no interpreter, she flew into the shadow of the lilac trees, through the house, into the porch, where Hannah was waiting with trepidation the result of the interview.

"I'm so sorry," cried Hannah; "I could not help it! If Master Sherwood hadn't forgot his hat and gloves, it wouldn't have happened."

"It is no matter now, Hannah, I ought not to have stopped," said Rena, her hands trembling so that she could scarcely tie the strings of her bonnet. It was not from fear, but ten thousand new and strange emotions.

"Dear me!" exclaimed the good dairy-woman, "and to think of your walking home, when you are in such a flurry. Where is your pretty white horse?"

“It is a little lame, and I would not ride him to-day. Good-bye, Hannah, and tell Sherwood, if you meet him alone, that he must not try to see me again before he goes. Bid him good-bye for me, and tell him—” She either forgot what she had to say, or something was the matter with her throat which choked the words, for she squeezed Hannah’s hand, and ran through the gate without finishing the sentence she had begun.

Hannah was vexed with Mr. Lindsey, and she was vexed with the baby for drumming so furiously on Sherwood’s hat, and thus attracting the attention of his father; and as she could not vent her anger on the illustrious Senator, she did what many a one has done before, wreaked it on the weak and innocent. She caught up the little drummer, who fixed his round eyes in astonishment on her face, not knowing what he had done to inspire such a sudden desire to behold him so near, and gave him a smart maternal slap. Such an extraordinary ebullition of temper on her part, for Hannah was generally just and good-natured, might well justify the extraordinary effect produced. The little gentleman held his breath till the pink of his cheeks turned a deep purple, and his lips looked as if stained with blackberries, like the babes of the woods—then suddenly there burst from his throat an accumulated volume of sound, as if all the wrongs of babyhood were concentrated in his single pair of lungs. At this particular moment Mr. Lindsey and his son passed through the yard. Hannah was deeply mortified, for she had a great pride in having it so often said that she had the best children, the quietest babies in the neighbourhood, that she had a peculiar talent in managing them. This mortification was enhanced by self-reproach for having punished the blameless infant for another’s fault; and when, after having soothed the vociferous warbler by her caresses, it grasped, with reviving spirit, a lump of nice stamped butter from the platter, and defaced the rose

with its dimpled hands, she suffered the real act of disobedience to escape unpunished. This soothed her conscience, and with her usual serenity and activity she finished the duties of the day.

CHAPTER XII.

“I hail thy house of prayer—
 New England’s banquet day—
 For the sweetest joys of life’s young hours,
 Were born beneath thy ray.”

THANKSGIVING GREETING.

“The wintry west extends his blast,
 And hail and rain does blow;
 Or, the stormy north sends driving forth
 The blinding sleet and snaw:
 While tumbling brown, the burn comes down,
 And roars frae bank to brae;
 And bird and beast in covert rest,
 And pass the heartless day.”

BURNS.

IN our last chapter the vine wreaths, rich and flourishing, covered the arbour; the flowers, gay and abundant, gave beauty to the eye and fragrance to the senses; and the sun, as he travelled the resplendent path of the Zodiac, was passing through the burning sign of Leo.

Now the grape leaves are shrivelled and brown, or all borne away on the wild northern blast; the flowers are gone like a vanished rainbow; and the wintry sun is moving through the starry bow and silver arrows of Sagittarius.

The Hon. Mr. Lindsey and his wife are at the capital of our country; their son is in the metropolis pursuing his professional studies; and Aunt Debby is gone with Rena to spend the thanksgiving day at the home of her brother, where Henry,

the young collegian, is passing his winter holidays. She is also accompanied by another very unexpected guest.

It chanced that the lady to whom Stella was transferred when her time with Mrs. Brown expired, was called away unexpectedly from home, and requested Aunt Debby to take her into her household till her return. She did this reluctantly, on Rena's account; but Rena, happy in the consciousness of Sherwood's undivided love, and looking with charity on all mankind, put the most amiable construction on Stella's conduct. She believed that she had deceived herself, rather than that she had sought to deceive her. She pitied her so much, she was glad to have an opportunity of showing her the kindness of a sister; and then it was exquisite delight for the unenvying Rena to sit and gaze on the lovely star-eyed girl. When Colonel Fay wrote for his daughter and sister to come and pass the festival of the year with them, Stella was still at Sunny Dell, and Rena entreated permission of Aunt Debby to take her with them.

"It would be cruel to leave her behind," she said, "as she has no home of her own to receive her on this blessed banquet day. You will see my brother," she cried, turning to Stella, "my own darling brother Henry. Oh! he is the most beautiful boy in the world. Boy! I ought not to call him so; he is eighteen years old, almost nineteen. And my father, Stella, you will see him too. You did when you were a very little girl, but you do not recollect him. You do not know what a father I have. He is such a noble-looking man, so tall, so grand, so good and gentle. He reminds me of a forest tree, so strong that the tempest cannot bend it, and yet the little birds make their nests in its boughs and shelter their young ones in its leaves. Is it not true, Aunt Debby? Did you ever know a man so perfect as my father?"

"He is a good man, Rena—one of the best, yes! the very best I ever knew!"

“And my mother, my step-mother, Stella, you will love her dearly; she is so kind. I once dreaded the idea of a step-mother, but now I am grateful to Heaven for having bestowed on me so great a blessing. Dear Aunt Debby, too, my other mother, who has made Sunny Dell a dear, beloved home to me.”

In her overflowing enthusiasm, she enumerated the treasures of her heart and home, when she recollected that it might seem like boasting to the parentless and brotherless charity girl, and with instinctive delicacy she paused.

“Are these all your blessings, Rena? have you omitted none in the long list?” asked Stella.

“Oh, no, ten thousand others are mine—too many for tongue to tell,” she answered, but her crimsoned cheeks told of a treasure more dear, more precious than all, concealed within her heart of hearts,

“With pious ardours worshipped there,
And never mentioned but in prayer.”

It was Thanksgiving morning—the banquet day of New-England; the day on which man makes a covenant of gratitude with his Maker for the golden harvest, the ripened fruit, the gathered grain, and all the blessings the rolling year has brought. The day when the scattered members of the household gather beneath the paternal roof, and the severed links of family love are united again into one strong and brightening chain. A day, to which every true son and daughter of the granite hills of New England will look back with deep emotion, whether they dwell beneath the sunny skies of the south, or have passed with bolder wing beyond the Atlantic wave.

On this time-honoured anniversary, Rena sat down at her father's bounteous board. The travellers had arrived late the preceding evening, cold and weary, and though the joy of meeting triumphed for a while over bodily fatigue, they found

more attractions in a warm bed and promised rest than social communion. Now refreshed and invigorated they met around a table, which well represented an altar where the incense of grateful and adoring hearts went up, mingling with the smoke of the viands and the odour of the spices. It was a charming family group. Behind a majestic turkey, the monarch of the board, whose bright, brown skin was embroidered with the parsley's emerald sprigs, appeared the lofty form of Colonel Fay, his fine blue eye shedding a benignant lustre on the domestic shrine. Opposite to him, presiding over a miracle of pastry, in the form of a magnificent chicken pie, sat the amiable step-mother, who had caused a perpetual thanksgiving in the home she had entered. Rena *would* have a seat on one side of her father, and she placed Stella on the other, and there he shone in the zenith of manhood, between the morning-glory of Stella's beauty and the star-light brightness of Rena.

Aunt Debby, over whose toilet Rena had carefully presided, astonished her brother by her softened and lady-like appearance. She had become so accustomed to braided hair and lace collars, that she no longer thought she "looked like a fool," with these adornments, and forgot she had ever dispensed with them. Henry, the fair and beautiful youth, with brow of alabaster, and locks of silk, and smooth, "unrazored lip," sat next his sister, basking in the blaze of loveliness beaming on him from the opposite side. He could not eat, though his plate was crowded with luxuries; he was faint as from a *coup-de-soleil*. Such pencils of starry rays kept playing lambently over his face, he was literally dazzled and bewildered. Stella saw the effect she had produced, and exulted in it. She felt no admiration herself for Henry's girlish beauty, which gave to his person such an air of extreme youth, that she could look upon him only as a boy; but her vanity was gratified by the spontaneous homage, and her cheeks glowed with rosier brilliancy.

"Children," said the Colonel, looking benevolently round him, "you are not doing justice to your mother's Thanksgiving feast. Rena, my darling, is it possible you have laid down your knife and fork? Henry, this will never do. We shall mark you as an ingrate if you do not eat. Young lady, you must feed your blooming roses."

"Is our gratitude to be measured by the food we consume, father?" asked Rena. "Is it out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth *eateth*?"

"I do not know that I would make it a gauge of morals," answered her father, smiling on his favourite, "but where much is given, much is required."

Their plates were now exchanged, for those containing triangular pieces of the different families of pies and tarts of every hue and taste, from the glowing crimson of the cranberry, to the deep orange of the pumpkin.

Rena, whose appetite was already satiated, began to twirl her plate rapidly round, to the astonishment and alarm of her right-hand neighbour.

"What are you doing, merry one?" asked the Colonel.

"I am trying an experiment, that I remember. I want to see if I can't turn this rainbow into a milk-white wheel, by making the rays mingle."

"Take care you don't deposit your rainbow in our laps," said Aunt Debby, seeing Henry's coat powdered by the white sugar, that flew off during the gyrations. It was a happy meal. Rena was as completely a child, as when she captivated Sherwood's boyish imagination. She was so wild with joy at being once more at her father's side, her spirit effervesced and sparkled in all kinds of innocent gayety. She brought her cat to the table, a beautiful, privileged household animal, with a skin like down, white as a snow-drift, only a spot of grayish brown on each temple, and eyes of soft dark gray, instead of the light green hue peculiar to the

feline race; and putting a piece of pie in its velvet paws, it sat purring gravely and quietly, looking up occasionally at its young mistress with a countenance of ineffable complacency. Even a common cat crowns with beauty a domestic scene—what grace then must such a beautiful, gentle creature have imparted to the group, in the lap of our bewitching Rena.

“If Cygnet were only here!” she exclaimed.

“You would bring him to the table too, I suppose?” said Aunt Debby.

Rena with eloquent tongue described her milk-white favourite, and dwelt enthusiastically on the kindness of Aunt Debby in making her such a present, but the memory of Sherwood was associated with Cygnet, and she sighed to think the festival of gratitude must pass unshared by him.

The day was clouded, the sky wearing the pale, leaden hue, that marks the gathering snow-storm. A bleak wind was blowing from the north-east, but, seated by the roaring chimney, no one thought of the inclemency of the elements.

It is customary to hallow a portion of the day by religious exercises, and the bell of the village church sent forth its deep, mellow sound on the northern blast, summoning man to the worship of his Maker.

“Is it not too cold to venture out this morning?” asked Henry, gazing on the warm roses of Stella’s cheeks.

“I think it is,” said Aunt Debby, warming her hands by the ruddy blaze.

“So do I,” repeated Stella, not insensible to the personal comfort she was enjoying by that glowing fireside.

“And I,” cried Rena, who, instead of sitting down with the rest, was running about, opening little cupboards and drawers, to see if everything looked as it did when she left home, “I would not stay at home for the world! I want to see our dear, good, beloved minister. I want to hear his deep, magnificent voice, to meet his benign glance, and clasp his

kind, parental hand in mine. Oh! Stella, he is one of the treasures I was ungrateful enough not to mention— dear, excellent Doctor Clifford. Henry, have you seen him yet?"

"No—I have not been abroad."

"Then come with me, my brother. Shame, if the cold keeps you at home which he, you know, must brave!"

"That's right, my little Snowbird!" cried her father, patting her on the shoulder. "I do believe you have wings folded up here! A warm heart thaws the winter's cold. There is warmth enough in this one little heart to melt the ice of the poles! Sister Debby, do you not agree with me now?—you disputed my philosophy years ago."

"I know she has thawed some of the ice that was incrusting the polar regions of *my* heart," replied Aunt Debby, looking affectionately at Rena. "I believe I am renewing my youth in hers. Do you see, brother, what a fool she has made of me?"

"I see how exceedingly improved and beautiful you are, sister Debby; and if Rena's little fingers have anything to do with the transformation, it is another proof of the magic of her touch. I always felt sorry to see one to whom nature has been so liberal, neglectful of her gifts. A woman never can be careless of her dress and personal appearance without losing something of the delicacy and refinement of feeling peculiar to her sex."

"I was fond enough of dress when a girl. Don't you remember how I used to wind garlands of wild-flowers in my hair?"

"Yes, and how handsome you looked. You was as wild a gipsy then as our Rena."

"Oh! this is all nonsense," cried Aunt Debby, smothering a sigh. "Let us all go to church."

So Rena, as usual, prevailed; and to church they all went, except Mrs. Fay, who remained at home to send baskets of

provisions to the poor, whom she remembered in her own overflowing abundance. The church was built on a gradual eminence, sloping towards the south, in the centre of a smooth common, which in summer was the colour of the most brilliant emerald. Now, it was covered with a cold, white carpet, which retained the print of every foot that pressed it. The lofty spire of the edifice looked like a pillar of white marble, supporting the lead-coloured arch above. The first glimpse of those consecrated walls made Rena's heart glow within her; but when she entered and saw the venerated form of her beloved pastor, bending over the sacred desk,—when she heard the tones of a voice which always sounded like the music of heaven to her ear, her eyes filled with tears, and all the memories of her childhood clustered around her. It was his hand that had shed the dew of baptism on her infant brow. It was his prayers that had hallowed the grave of her mother. It was he who had gently led her through the green fields and by the still waters, and taught her to worship and love the God who created and the Saviour who had redeemed her. There he stood leaning over the crimson velvet cushion, the crimson curtains hanging in rich, voluminous folds behind, in his flowing black surplice and milk-white bands; his cheek pale, save where the glow of inspiration was just beginning to dawn, his brow, where benevolence and intellect sat enthroned in mingled benignity and majesty, slightly shaded by the dark-brown hair, now sprinkled with silvery gray—as perfect a representative of an apostle of Jesus Christ as ever adorned the sacerdotal profession. But when he opened his lips, and that voice, deep, sweet, and solemn as the diapason of an organ, swelled on the ear, and rolling round the arching wall, filled every corner of the building with its magnificent volume, the soul seemed to float upward on those deep billows of sound, like a bark on the rising tide.

May we be allowed to pause one moment here, to pay an

humble tribute to the memory of one, whose evangelical excellence resembled the character here delineated; one who, with talents that might have commanded a wide and elevated sphere of action, was contented to remain in the narrower limits where his youthful energies were first exerted? With the gentleness of the beloved disciple, whose lips distilled the balm of love, he led his flock to the feet of the Saviour, breathing, in notes as sweet as "angels use," the promises of the Gospel; or, when love and mercy pleaded in vain, with the majesty of the Apostle of the Gentiles, proclaiming the thunders of the violated law to the hardened and impenitent sinner. Neither the burning sun of summer, nor the icy blasts of winter, kept him from the chamber of the sick, the bed of the dying, or the dwelling of the poor. He is gone, but his memory is immortal. His image remains a household god in the hearts and homes of the people whom he loved, embalmed with holier incense than ever hallowed the idol fanes of Greece or Rome. Peace to thy ashes, beloved pastor, venerated saint—thou sleepest in the bosom of the beautiful valley consecrated as the scene of thy labours and thy prayers. There the grand old elms, that clasp their hundred arms round the white walls of thy parsonage, as they rustle in the breeze, shall whisper thy name to children yet unborn; and long as the walls of the church, once thy sanctuary, shall lean on the blue of heaven, the echoes of thy rich and august voice will linger in music there. Yes!—

The deep, adoring voice
That once that temple filled,
No longer breathes rich music there,—
Its tones in death are stilled.

But as the incense smokes,
When dim the altar's fire,
So floats the memory of that voice
Around the sacred pyre.

We love the hallowed walls
Where those deep echoes dwell,
And we love the noble elms, that shade
The home he loved so well.

A blessing on it rest—
And may its "grand, old" trees,
By the brightest sunbeams long be gilt,
And catch the purest breeze.

But, we will hang our garland of love on the tomb, where the willow weeps, and turn to where Rena sits, given up heart and soul to the holy influences of the hour.

With all her wild gayety she had a deep feeling of piety, running like a vein of virgin gold through the earthly alloy of her nature. But hers was the religion of love. She did not worship a far-off Deity, dwelling in clouds, and thunder, and thick darkness. The kingdom of heaven was in her heart, and there the God she adored had set up an everlasting throne, and there he reigned king of kings and lord of lords. No unhallowed thought could be cherished in the presence-chamber of that holy guest; no evil passion invade a sovereignty so glorious and absolute. Far different were the emotions of those two young girls, as they sat side by side in the village church. Rena gazed on the heavenly countenance of her pastor, and gathering his words of wisdom and truth, felt as if she were feeding on angels' food. Stella's eye wandered over the congregation, seeking the admiration of men, forgetting that her thoughts were bare to the omniscient Jehovah. Rena's hands were clasped, and her attitude was as still as marble. Stella's fingers played with her golden ringlets, or fluttered among the leaves of her hymn-book; and if she glanced at the breathing statue at her side, she thought Rena was ridiculous to affect so much devotion, and excessively foolish to lend *ner* her beautiful scarlet mantle, and wear a dark and comparatively unbecoming cloak herself. Had she known

how Rena loved the hue of scarlet since Sherwood had sworn allegiance to it, she would have thought her more foolish still. But if Rena's cloak was not as becoming as the scarlet mantle which she had so disinterestedly folded around Stella, it did not seem to chill the ardent welcome which greeted her from every side, when the services of the morning were over. She was the village favourite—and Stella's envious heart sickened at the demonstrations of interest and affection lavished upon her. Dr. Clifford, as he passed down the aisle, where his loving people pressed round him, to catch one benignant smile, one kind word, took both her hands in his, calling her the lamb of his flock, the child of his prayers; the matrons caressed her with maternal tenderness; the young girls with sisterly affection; and the boys and young men crowded round the sleigh, and wrapped the buffalo skins round her feet, with as much zeal as if it were a Russian princess enthroned upon the furs. It is true they gazed admiringly at Stella; but she did not absorb their admiration, she did not blind, dazzle them, as she had the girlish Henry. They contemplated Rena with delight; and Stella hated her in proportion as others seemed to love her. She could not imagine what charm she bore about her. It could not be mere beauty, for was she not herself fairer and far more beautiful? It could not be wealth or rank, for she was only a plain farmer's daughter. It is no wonder Stella was puzzled to discover the amulet she wore. But she did wear one, as we have before asserted, which, like the opal ring of the Genii, drew towards her all within the circle of her influence. The amulet was love, self-forgetting, self-sacrificing love—that love which has smiles for the joyous and tears for the sad, and sympathy, tenderness, and kindness for all who need or ask.

About night, the clouds, which had worn a bluish gray tint during the day, opened their bosoms and discharged the treasures of snow with which they were laden. First it came

down in light flurries, gentle and soft as down, melting as it fell, then in gathering flakes, feather-like, and forming into plumes on the naked and icy branches. But after a while the wind blew in stormy gusts, and sent it drifting against the windows, and tossing tempestuously in the atmosphere. Boys and men, too, were seen scudding along before the mighty snow-spirit that followed, covering them with a cold, white mantle; with the collars of their great-coats turned high above their ears; their faces tingling as if a razor were passing over them. Blessed on such an evening is the genial fireside, and bright and happy was the group that gathered round the hearth of Colonel Fay. Even Rena, who had been running out of doors, catching the snow as it fell, and making it into balls, with which she threatened to snow-ball Henry and Stella, while they sat comfortably by the fire, even she was glad to escape from the keen edge of the blast, and warm her aching hands.

"I fear you must wait till to-morrow, before I make my snow image," she cried, pressing Henry's soft cheek with her icy hand. "Henry, do you ever do such boyish things in college?"

"We are famous for snow-balling," he replied; but it is doubtful whether he himself ever won any laurels in the game. Rena looked thoughtfully and dreamily at the flashing coals. She recollected how she and Sherwood had toiled together one winter's night in their yard, making what he called her palace of snow, where he enthroned her as the Empress of the Frost, and she thought she would give all that royalty ever called its own, if he were only near, seated at her side by that thanksgiving fire.

"Where are you going, father?" she cried, seeing him enter with his great-coat, fur cap, and woollen gloves, "you are not going out such a night as this?"

"Why not, my child? I am well defended, and have been abroad in many a worse storm than this."

"But this is Thanksgiving evening, and you ought to stay at home with us. Indeed, we cannot spare you."

"No, we cannot," said Mrs. Fay; "the guests we have invited will not venture out in such weather, and Rena, I know, will be discontented if you are away."

The Colonel smiled gratefully on his wife and children, but shook his head, and buttoned up his coat.

"I must go and see a poor man, who is not expected to live through the night. A little boy has waded through the snow to bear me his dying request; I would not refuse it if the drifts were piled mountains high."

"Ah! it is poor Peter Foote, who has been sick so long. Is it not? He lives the other side of Green bridge. I am sorry you have to pass that bridge, for since the ice has broken up, such masses are gathered there, at the confluence of the two streams, I hear it is considered dangerous to ride over it."

"I shall walk," said the Colonel. "I should not like to expose a horse to such a cutting wind. It is Thanksgiving for beast as well as man, 'for the beast of the forest is His, and His are the cattle on a thousand hills.'"

His eye, lifted for a moment, acknowledged the Great Sovereignty of the universe, then rested on his family with tenderness and gratitude: gratitude for their boundless affection.

All bade him an affectionate adieu, but Rena followed him to the door, shuddering at the wild gust that came rushing in like a strong man, the moment it was opened. But he was going on an errand of mercy, and she was sure, if she was not looking through a glass darkly, she could see beautiful shining wings severing the storm clouds, and shielding his head from the fury of the blast.

"I wish I could go with you, father," she cried, "and help you to comfort the dying man. Doctor Clifford will be there, I know, for wherever there is sorrow and death, he follows to heal and sustain. Dear father, pray walk very carefully over that dangerous bridge. Step very lightly, for you are tall and heavy, and may break through."

The Colonel could not help laughing at her reiterated cautions, but he promised not to touch the planks if he could help it, "God blessed her," and plunged out into the driving storm. The little boy who brought the message was not to return, as he was not the son of the sick man, so the Colonel was entirely alone, and he strided along before the wind, thinking how much better off he was, thus strong and powerful, and able to wrestle with the elements, than the feeble, expiring being, whose couch he was about to visit. It was rather more than a mile to the bridge, and it was not long before he heard the dull murmurs of the river, chafing against the piers. The season, so far, had been unusually cold, and the river frozen over earlier than it had been, in the memory of the oldest inhabitant. This river, though not wide, had a remarkably serpentine course, and received in its meanderings some tributary streams, as broad and voluminous as itself. Several bridges spanned it, as it wound its silver coils through green meadows and sunny plains. In summer this beautiful, blue, pellucid stream, so sportive and capricious in its ways, now laughing in sunshine, now murmuring in shade, then gliding placidly, silently along, margined by "bonny spreading bushes" betraying its presence only by a richer, deeper, more luxuriant herbage; this sweet, joyous, shining river, gave inexpressible life and beauty to the landscape. And even in winter, when, bound in fetters of ice, it glassed the moonbeams on its bosom, it was still beautiful, and when those fetters were suddenly broken by the thaw-spirit, and the waters tossed about the glittering ice chains and revelled madly in their recovered freedom, beauty and sublimity mingled in the scene.

The bridge was called Green bridge, because a man of that name lived just above it. It was far from new, and had been repaired several times, for the pressure of the breaking ice in winter was of an immense weight. The Colonel, when he first placed his foot on the planks, thought of Rena's parting

injunction, and he did step rather lighter than usual. He saw a very heavily loaded wood sledge right before him, and he was sure that if he was heavy, he was not as much so as the burden that preceded him. He passed along over the central arch, the sledge touched the opposite bank, and he stepped with a firmer, more assured tread, when, instantaneous as the lightning's flash, the plank gave way beneath his feet, there was a terrible crash of falling timbers, of shivering ice, and he was hurled down with the ruins, and dashed into the water, among fragments of ice, with a force that stunned and produced a transient suspension of all his faculties. He soon, however, revived to a full sense of the horrors of his situation. He was a good swimmer, but the current was so strong, dashing through large, jagged cakes of ice, that, impeding its course, only lashed it into wilder foam, and his heavy outside garment added such weight to his limbs, benumbed and chilled as they were, he was scarcely capable of any muscular exertion. Still he struggled, like a strong man with his fate, the great law of self-preservation urging him on, even when failing nature was ready to yield. If he could reach the bank where the slender willows bent over the stream, and grasp one of the branches, he could swing himself to the shore; but for this, he had to breast the current, rushing against him, full of sharp, cold, icy fragments, as well as large blocks, whirling and plunging about and wrestling with each other, yet all combining their forces against him. Though unseen, the moon was rolling cold and dull behind the snow-clouds, blunting the edge of darkness, and revealing the perils to which he was exposed. He called for help, till his hoarse voice could utter no sound, but the only answer he heard was a mocking echo from the opposite bank. While forcing his way desperately, almost despairingly, towards the bending willows, his mind, with supernatural clearness and power, gathered into that one drop of time all the thoughts,

feelings, and events of his whole life. Incidents and emotions over which the waves of oblivion had rolled and apparently washed out every trace, came up in as strong relief as the ruined bridge against the stormy sky. The past was like a scroll, written in invisible ink, dim and colourless, but which he now read by the strong blaze of an enkindled conscience, and every letter and line emerged in characters of fire. Realizing awfully, grandly the eternity of his being, and the might and glory of Him who gave it, he felt willing to die, trusting in that divine love, which is stronger than death and deeper than the grave. He remembered the dying man, to whose bed-side he was hastening, and whom he was about to precede to the dark confines of an unknown world. He thought of the loving family, from which he had just parted, and which he might never again behold on earth, and a paroxysm of agony shook his frame.

“Oh, thou great and glorious God,” he cried, out of the depths of his spirit, in the midst of the whirling waters. “Oh! thou Father of Mercies—thou Giver and Guardian of life—spare me a little longer, for their sakes—not mine! My wife—my son—my darling, darling Rena!”

Hark! to the sound of fast-coming bells! Faintly they tinkled through the whirling drifts, but still they came nearer and nearer. Suddenly the sound ceased. It was probably some traveller, who had reached the verge of the chasm made by the fallen timbers, and was arrested timely on the brink.

“Help, help!” he cried, collecting all the remaining energies of life, in that one last appeal—“help, in the name of God, for a drowning man!”

At this moment, a gigantic block of ice, driven along, made such an eddy in the water that he was whirled near the spot to which his straining eyes had been turned. He clutched at one of the willow boughs, but icy, slippery, and slender, it eluded his stiffening fingers, and sinking back with a deeper plunge, light, motion, and consciousness forsook him.

In the mean time, the family circle surrounded the merry blaze, unconscious of the danger of him they loved so well. It is true when the blast came rushing and howling against the window, shaking the glass as if it would shiver it into atoms, and they saw the snow-wreaths hang thicker and thicker on the sashes, till they formed an impenetrable curtain without, they would wish he was at home, and pile on the wood, as if he could be sensible of its warmth. Aunt Debby exerted herself for the entertainment of all, and opening the store-house of her memory, she told many a wondrous tale of persons frozen in snow-drifts, wedged in ice-bergs, or drowned in the dark river. From these, by a natural association of ideas, she proceeded to ghost-stories, and related one after another, till one could fancy they saw one of these dwellers of the "pale realms of shade," rising from their dim abodes, to wander about at the midnight hour and point the spectral finger at the undetected murderer. At last Rena covered her ears with her hands and declared she would not listen any longer, for it filled her with direful apprehensions about her father, for there was something so solemn in his being called out on such a night to visit a dying man.

"Pray, don't infect me with your fears, Rena!" cried Mrs. Fay, in an anxious voice. "Your father knows how to take care of himself."

Rena started up. She was sure she heard the gate open—she was sure she heard her father's step. Without stopping for a candle, which the wind would have extinguished, she ran through the passage, into which the snow had drifted in fantastic heaps, and unclosed the door, though the frosty latch seemed glued to her fingers.

"Father!" she exclaimed.

"Rena!" It was not the voice of her father, but she knew it well, and lightning flashes of electric joy illumined her inmost being. A pair of arms, dripping and cold, clasped her to a bosom of ice.

"I come like a river-god to my beloved Undine!" he cried; "but forgive me—I chill you, I congeal you!"

"I thought it was my father," said she, as she had done four years before, when clasped in his victorious arms. "But where have you been—for it is water, not snow, that is turning to ice on your garments? Come, where the fire is blazing. Come—you will perish here!"

"Your father is near, Rena. Be not alarmed—he is safe now."

"Now! good Heavens! what has happened?"

"Now!" exclaimed Mrs. Fay, who supposing that it was her husband who entered, had followed Rena into the passage, and listened with astonishment to the stranger's voice. "Tell me, I beseech you, what evil has befallen my husband?"

"Be not alarmed, madam. He was in danger of drowning, but is now safe. A friend is accompanying him home. I hastened forward to prepare you for the accident, and allay your fears. The sleigh is already at the gate—I will go and assist him."

Rena sprang over the threshold into a drift almost as high as her head, but the snow blew fiercely in her face, blinding her eyes, and she would have fallen before the resisting wind had not Sherwood again caught her in his freezing arms and borne her into the house.

"This is madness, Rena! You can do no good, and again I repeat, your father is safe."

Yes! he was safe from a drowning death—but no words can describe the consternation and dismay of his family when they saw him brought in, supported by Sherwood and another gentleman, his face pale as a corpse, save where it was discoloured with purple, and his powerful and energetic frame drooping and collapsed.

"I live!" said he, faintly, taking in with a dim glance the pale and agitated group around him; "and *this* is my pre-

server!"—pressing the hand of Sherwood—"take care of him!"

Mrs. Fay was a woman of great feeling and remarkable presence of mind, and, assisted by Aunt Debby, who, in alarm for her brother, forgot all selfish emotions, they soon had hot blankets and warm draughts, which restored life and warmth and action to the chilled limbs and almost frozen blood. It was not long before his pale, discoloured face assumed a more natural hue; and feeling a grateful contrast in the downy bed that pressed softly round his bruised and aching frame to the icy couch in which he had been laid, he sank into a deep and soothing sleep.

Meanwhile Henry, with unwonted animation, had attended to Sherwood's freezing condition, for he was literally covered with a coat of ice, and icicles glittered in his hair. He brought in his valise, took him to his own room, assisted him to exchange his saturated garments, and dry the melting sleet from his dankened locks. The transition was very grateful, but a still more grateful one awaited him in the family sitting-room. As he entered at one door, Aunt Debby was coming in at another, and she met the young man face to face. But the lightnings were quenched in her coal black eyes—they looked as if they had been moistened by tears!

"Young man," said she, holding out her hand, "you have saved my brother's life, and I thank you. I am not a woman to waste words; but you will find my remembrance of benefits, is deep and strong as that of injuries. Here, take the colonel's seat, next the fire, and drink a glass of this hot, mulled wine; I am sure you need it. Rena, give him a bumper."

Sherwood took the brimming glass from Rena's trembling hand, and pledging everlasting respect to Aunt Debby in words, and everlasting love to Rena in looks, drained the spicy and spirit-warming beverage. The beautiful Stella be-

held the interchange of glances, where soul flashed to soul ; and the evil demon of her nature, like a serpent roused from its torpor, began to sting and coil. She tried to think it was Henry who had induced him to come—that it was a mere desire for a Thanksgiving frolic ; even the wild hope that she herself was the magnet, had elated her with momentary triumph. As she looked on Rena's face, now literally resplendent with the light and glow of the heart, she did not know that baleful passions were darkening her own. Astrology speaks of malignant stars ; if there ever were such, they were shining now coldly, wickedly, under Stella's pencilled brows. If she could devise any means of depriving Rena of the loadstone she seemed to possess!—but deep was the casket that contained it, and it could only be reached through the blood of her heart. Ah ! if the thoughts that glance into the minds of the envious and jealous were daguerreotyped on the walls that enclose them, how startling and awful would be the revelation ! How black would be the shades, how deep the lines, how appalling the combinations ! But there is a tablet, unseen by mortal vision, where these thoughts are delineated, not by the sunbeams of heaven, but the blazing eye of Omnipotence ; and no chemic art can ever obliterate the burning lines. But one stream has power to efface them ; and wo be to thee, fair and beautiful Stella, if it flows not over thy polluted heart !

“And now,” said Aunt Debby, drawing her chair next to Sherwood, while Rena sat on a low stool leaning on her lap—a habit which she had acquired at Sunny Dell—“will you tell us the history of my brother's danger and deliverance ? If your tongue is not yet thawed, another glass of mulled wine will do it.”

“I fear my head would not bear another,” replied Sherwood ; “that or some other influences have made it feel wondrous light.”

"Nonsense!" said Aunt Debby; "who ever heard of one's being touched in the brain, Thanksgiving eve? God be praised!" added she, with gravity, "we may now truly call it Thanksgiving eve."

"And next to God, *him*," said Rena, in a low voice. But low as it was, Sherwood heard her, and would again have buffeted the cold waters for such a reward.

"The history of his deliverance is short," said Sherwood; "of his danger, I know not how long. I was urging my weary horse through the snow-blast that blinded us both, when he suddenly stopped on the confines of the bridge. Without looking to see the cause, and attributing it to weariness, I was base enough to whip him, so impatient was I to reach the haven to which I was bound. The resisting animal would not move, and, clearing away the snow-flakes from my vision, I rose and looked forward. A black and yawning chasm opened right before the horse's head; the bridge had fallen, and its ruins mingled with the dashing waters. Appalled at the danger I had escaped, I felt as if I ought to have got down on my knees to my horse and asked his pardon for the lash I had given him—when a cry such as only man can utter in the extremity of mortal agony, came up from the depth of the river, and pierced my ears like sharp steel. 'Help!' cried the voice—'help, in the name of God! for a drowning man!'"

"Oh, my father!" exclaimed Rena, bursting into tears.

"It was indeed an awful moment," added Sherwood, in a softened voice; "but had I known it was *your* father, Rena, I could not have winged my way with more rapidity to the spot whence the sound proceeded. It was the cry of human misery, and it was enough. Before I arrived, no noise was heard but the roaring of the river mingling with the howling of the storm. I perceived a quick, strong vibration in one of the willows, that did not seem to be caused by the wind

which only swayed its branches aside, and I thought the drowning person must have caught hold of it in vain. Rena, how pale you look; I dare not go on!"

"Oh yes, tell how you saved him!—for you did save him; oh, he is safe now!"

"That I find it difficult to relate. I remember seeing a dark object rising above the water, then sinking, and rising again; and my plunging in and grappling with the ice that rushed between it and me, and hurling it from me with a strength I had never had before. I remember grasping the body at last and bearing it towards the shore, how, I know not. When we reached the bank I was nearly as lifeless as himself; but I soon recovered, and taking my cloak, which I had thrown from me ere I plunged, wrapped it round his body. I recognised him, for the moon's light was strong through the clouds; and I felt as if I would willingly sacrifice my life for his. I tried to drag him to my sleigh, which I had left by the bridge, but the exhaustion following unnatural effort, made it an unavailing attempt. I chafed his benumbed hands, and laying my face to his, breathed my vitality through his pallid lips. He lived, he moved—" Here Sherwood's voice choked, and he looked down to hide his glistening eyes. Oh! how Rena loved him at that moment! how she longed to take that hand, that heroic hand, which had saved her father's life, and cover it with her pure and grateful kisses! But Aunt Debby did what she dared not—she took his hand and pressed it in silence, for she could not speak. Tears stole down the cheeks of the gentle Henry; no eye was dry but Stella's. The dew that moistens the tender herbage and the flower leaves the rock and sand arid as before.

"And this is all," said Sherwood, with reviving animation. "The gentleman who accompanied me here, most opportunely rode up at this moment, and adding his cloak to mine, which already covered him, and his strength to mine,

assisted me in placing him in my sleigh, and directed me to another road, which we could travel in security. I ought to rejoice in this occurrence, if Colonel Fay is not too great a sufferer, since I have won a welcome of which I was a little doubtful—an uninvited guest on Thanksgiving eve should bring powerful credentials with him."

"But how did you know we were here?" suddenly asked Aunt Debby.

Rena blushed as if she knew more than she was willing to tell; but Sherwood answered.

"I knew that Henry was here—and it was natural for me to think that you would all follow the time-honoured custom of meeting around the Thanksgiving board."

A sumptuous board was spread for Sherwood, and as the Colonel still slept calmly and soundly as an infant, Mrs. Fay came forth to do the honours of hospitality in compliment and gratitude to the preserver of her husband.

The evening closed with hilarity. Henry, like another Cymon, warmed into life by the magic of beauty, was even gay, but Rena, in the midst of her own happiness, felt a painful misgiving for his future peace, when she witnessed the fascinating influence Stella exercised over him. She did not want him to love Stella. But what could she do to prevent it? She was sorry she had asked her to come home with her; but then it would have been selfish and unkind to have left her behind, and her father had told her it was perfectly right. She tried to banish these unpleasant feelings, but still, whenever she saw Henry's large, soft, innocent black eyes following her every movement, she could not help thinking of the moth fluttering round the flame that is to consume it; the bird charmed by the glittering serpent; attracting but to destroy.

CHAPTER XIII.

‘Endearing! endearing!

Why so endearing
Are those dark lustrous eyes
Through their silk lashes peering?
They love me—they love me—
Deeply—sincerely—
And more than aught else on earth
I love them dearly.”

MOTHERWELL.

“I cannot bear that cold, cold look,
That chilling glance to me;
Contempt I may from others brook,
But never scorn from thee!”

* * * *

IT WAS several days before Colonel Fay recovered from the effects of his terrible bath. When he again took his seat in the family circle, it was affecting to see the looks of anxious love bent on his pale but smiling countenance. Never before had his strong form been bowed by weakness, and though it was caused by an accident which human foresight might have prevented, instead of one of those direct visitations of the Almighty in which no immediate agency is visible, still his hold on life had been loosened, and they felt its insecurity. The lofty pillar had leaned from its base—it *might* fall, and the happiness of the household be crushed by the ruin. Rena hovered round him, like the Snowbird, whose name she bore. She had always adored her father, and now the life that Sherwood had preserved seemed doubly dear. Then to see him and Aunt Debby such cordial friends, after such bitter enmity on her part, seemed more like a dream than a reality. She

never called him by the name of Lindsey, and the family also avoided a sound which awakened such wounding associations. It was nothing but *Sherwood*, and he would not have exchanged this cordial, endearing familiarity for all the cold *Mr. Lindseys* in the world. He felt upon the same footing with Henry, and the freedom of the house was his. When a young man who visits a northern farmer can enter the *kitchen* with impunity, he may esteem himself a privileged guest. The kitchens of New England are *palaces* to what they are in Southern regions, where the sable race alone preside. It is no unfrequent thing to see them handsomely carpeted and curtained, and the mantel-piece tastefully adorned. There is always a back kitchen, and a multiplicity of closets, where the machinery of washing and cooking is kept ; so that nothing that looks like drudgery defaces the room, which is often adjoining the parlour or family sitting-room. Mrs. Fay's kitchen was a proverb for neatness, and there Rachel presided, an honoured and beloved member of the family. Faithful as the sun, industrious as the bee, and cheerful and tireless as the lark, she accomplished more work with her single arm than half a dozen common servants. Her brasses shone like burnished gold. Right in the centre of the mantel-piece was an immense brass platter, an heir-loom of the family, resembling one of the ancient ancilla, which, though never used, Rachel scoured regularly every Saturday morning with enthusiastic industry. Rena was very fond of the poetry of the kitchen, such as beating the whites of eggs, till they foamed like the cascade at Sunny Dell,—seasoning puddings and pies and cutting pastry in various original forms. There was a nice domestic carpet in front of the fire, a black varnished settee by the side of the chimney, which answered the double purpose of a seat and a shelter from the blast made by the opening door. Sherwood had a wonderful fancy for this settee, whenever Rena was engaged in her *poetry*, though the print of a little pair of mis-

chievous hands were often left in white flour on his dark broadcloth coat. Rena never looked more charming than when flitting about the kitchen, in her crimson merino frock and white apron, her sleeves pushed up to the elbows, with smiles coming and going on her sweet lips and dimpled cheeks.

Stella thought it very strange, that the son of the Hon. Mr. Lindsey should condescend to sit in a farmer's kitchen,—a place she avoided herself, as uncongenial, and rather vulgar. She was maturing a great plan in her head, which circumstances seemed to favour, and which, if successful, would have the twofold advantage of planting distrust and unhappiness in the bosom of Rena, and fill with wrath the proud Senator. Stella was skilled in all the mysteries of needlework, for she had served a long apprenticeship at this art. In all her homes she was employed in this manner, and her hands were unsoiled by any household drudgery. She had heard of beautiful milliners in the city, who had become great ladies, and married into aristocratic families. If she could once get there, and enter an establishment of this kind, she was sure her fortune would be made. The sudden and blinding admiration of Henry was a proof of the influence she could exert. She intended to seek an interview with Sherwood, just before he started, and, throwing herself on his protection, entreat him to carry her to the metropolis, whither he was himself bound. He could not refuse this. Rena would doubt the faith of her lover—Mr. Lindsey the integrity of his son. What a glorious scheme!

The evening before Sherwood's departure, he found himself alone with Colonel Fay. He felt that it was due to the latter, to speak to him openly of his attachment to his daughter, but a strange embarrassment impeded his usually fluent tongue. Colonel Fay unconsciously removed it by saying, "I know not how I can ever recompense you for my prolonged life. As sure as I feel the beating of my heart now, it would have been lying

cold beneath the clods of the valley, had you not found me under the deep water."

"I ask no recompense for a mere impulse of humanity, sir; I am a thousand times repaid already. But I would ask of you what would bind me to you by obligations which I can never cancel. Colonel Fay," he added, impetuously, "you must have seen that I love Rena; you must know it. May I consider the warm and cordial welcome I have received, as a sanction to my love?"

"I have seen it," replied the Colonel, frankly; "and if I thought *your* father would offer no more impediments than *hers*, the path before you would be smooth."

"My father"—said Sherwood, with hesitation—

"Is a proud and haughty man," resumed the Colonel; "he will probably look down with scorn upon an alliance with a farmer's daughter. You remember, when several years ago, my wild skating girl introduced you, I gave you but a frozen greeting. You told me that I did not like your father, and I did not; I never can like him, never wish to have any communion with him."

Sherwood's brow darkened, and it gave him a wonderful resemblance to his father. It was well that Aunt Debby was not present.

"I do not wish to wound your feelings," continued Colonel Fay, "for there is not a young man in the world whom I esteem more highly—esteem is a cold word—whom I love more cordially than you, Sherwood, and whom I would rejoice more to call my son."

Sherwood grasped his hand fervently

"But"—

"But"—repeated Sherwood, impatiently—

"But," said the Colonel, "if your father makes the least opposition, I never can allow my daughter to steal into the family of the man who inflicted such a deadly injury on mine:

To vindicate this resolution, I ought to tell you what that injury was. If you love my daughter, as I believe you do, you can understand the length and the breadth thereof. When my sister, whom you call Aunt Debby, was of the age of Rena, she was a gay, beautiful, and attractive girl, living in rural retirement, perfectly ignorant of the world, with a heart as warm and trusting as Rena's, as open to the influence of love. Your father won that heart with art and guile—I may be mistaken there, perhaps it was an easy conquest, for he was possessed of wondrous fascination—pledged her his faith, and received hers in undoubting confidence. I am really sorry, grieved to be obliged to reveal to you a story of treachery so black and unprecedented. He allowed the marriage preparations to go on, the bride to adorn herself for the nuptials, which he never intended to celebrate. Even then he was wedded to another. My sister had a proud, independent spirit. She scorned the idea of her family's avenging the insult, but she felt it to her heart's core. Yes, her heart became indurated seared as with a red-hot iron—her feelings turned to gall—her life made a barren waste. Can you wonder now, that she abhors the name you bear? Can you wonder that she has sought to shield her niece from an influence, which proved so fatal to herself? Can you wonder that I, her brother, should have at first looked coldly on the son of him who had murdered, yes, murdered, coldly, and deliberately, the life of a sister's heart!"

Sherwood had never seen the Colonel so greatly excited. His blue eye sparkled like steel clashing against steel. He, himself, listened with burning veins to the history of his father's dishonour. He felt it reflected on him; and his love, the love of the proud Senator's son for the farmer's daughter, seemed arrogance and presumption.

"No, I cannot wonder," said he, in a voice husky with suppressed emotion; "I only wonder you did not shoot me at

once. I wonder Aunt Debby did not annihilate, as well as scorch me, with her lightnings. But is it possible that my father has done this? There must be some extenuating circumstances. I know him proud, ambitious as an archangel, but I never knew him guilty of meanness. All his faults seemed lofty. Colonel Fay, I would put my right hand in this blaze and consume it, if I could disbelieve this tale."

"I have nothing extenuated, nor set down aught in malice," said the Colonel, in a calm tone. "Nothing but a sense of duty caused me to inflict on you so much pain. Had I not feared my God more than man, his blood or mine would, long ago, have reddened the ground. I have no doubt your father thinks me a coward because I never challenged him; but I would as soon have sought him in his chamber, and plunged a dagger in his breast, for duelling is nothing but cold-blooded murder. Tell me now, if you think your father will approve your choice?"

"He will not *approve*, but he may, in time, be brought to *consent*," replied Sherwood; "but surely, Colonel Fay, you will not sacrifice your daughter's happiness, I will not speak of my own, to a parent's pride or your own just resentment?"

"Are you *sure* that her happiness is involved? has she told you as much?"

"I know that she loves me, and I judge of her heart by my own. I have no thought of happiness, independent of her participation; no dream of ambition that she has not inspired. I loved her when she was a child of six years old. Even then she entwined herself with the chords of my heart. Time has only tightened and strengthened the fold. It will never loosen till the life-strings are cut."

"My poor little Snowbird!" said the father, tenderly and sadly; "I wish she had folded her wings a little closer over her heart; I cannot bear to think of her drooping and joyless. She is so young, so loving."

“She shall not droop,” interrupted Sherwood, passionately; “I will bear her up, as on an eagle’s wing! she shall bask in the eternal sunshine of love. Only give me time, a little time, and I know my father will consent. He loves me! I have felt his tears upon my cheek. Yes! he has a heart! Be not more inexorable than he.”

“Time!” repeated Colonel Fay, thoughtfully; “yes, time does wondrous things! Let us leave it to time. You are both very young; you have not yet acquired your profession; she is a mere child. Do not keep up any clandestine intercourse. Tempt her not into a correspondence. I would not that a letter, written by a child of mine, should fall into your father’s hands. In the mean time, be assured of my affections, my gratitude, and my confidence. As I said before, time does wondrous things, and you are yet in the morning of life. Be satisfied with the promise I now give you. My sister’s wrongs, my own deep sense of them, shall not present an insurmountable obstacle to your union. I will sacrifice all personal animosity for your mutual happiness. But your father must sacrifice *his* pride also. He must meet me at the altar, and present his burnt offering too. My child must not be the victim.”

Sherwood felt there was dignity and truth and justice in this decree; and there was something about Colonel Fay that stamped it with immutability. But he was young and hopeful, and was sure that every obstacle must give way at last, before the omnipotence of love. The stain upon his father’s honour, however, was ineffaceable, and it darkened his name. It shook his trust in the honour and integrity of man. He treated Aunt Debby with a respect, a deference he had never done before. Her wrongs made her sacred in his eyes. He now understood the idiosyncrasy of her character, and upbraided himself for his past injustice.

This was the last night of Sherwood’s stay. It was one of

those still, cold, shining nights, that so often gild the gloom of winter, when every ray that falls upon the earth's bosom of snow is reflected, not one absorbed. The young people of the village had planned a sleigh-ride, to indemnify themselves for their disappointment on Thanksgiving eve, when the storm kept them so closely within doors. This is one of the most exhilarating pleasures of a northern winter, and youth enters into it with a zest which more quiet in-door enjoyments can never inspire. The dazzling expanse, the apparent infinitude of the scene, where, far as the eye can reach, there is nothing but spotless white; the sparkling atmosphere, the brilliant scintillations of the stars, that sparkle with aurora borealian lustre; the gay music of the silvery tinkling bells, the swift motion of the gliding sleighs, the bird-like flight of the horses, as they skim, with noiseless hoofs, the smooth-trodden path—all these exciting influences make the tide of youthful spirits flow high; and bright flashing eyes, glowing cheeks, and merry, bell-like laughter, harmonize with them as beautifully as the crystalline heavens with the white, shining earth. Henry and Stella, Sherwood and Rena, joined the gay party. As the girls were shawling and cloaking, Rena, who had noticed Stella's predilection for the red mantle, was about to throw it over her shoulders, when Sherwood caught it and wrapped it round her own.

"You must be in uniform to-night, Rena," said he, untwisting a little scarlet band from his neck, and twining it round her head in Creolian style. The "sprite, gipsy, snow-bird," stood confused. Stella cast a withering glance upon her, as, with her vermilion crown flashing on the darkness of her hair, and scarlet drapery so carelessly, gracefully arranged, she bowed her eyes before the gaze of Sherwood. As he turned towards Colonel Fay, who approached him, he arrested this withering glance, and though the moment she was aware that he saw her, she called back the starry beam to her ceru-

lean orbs, she had made an impression that could not be effaced. It is a pity Henry had not seen the glance, and felt the same recoil; but never had the young syren so completely bewitched him as when, seated at his side, under the same buffalo skin, she reflected from her face the brightness of the heavens till it became almost insupportable to him. Her golden hair formed a halo round her brow, such as is seen in the pictures of the Virgin Mary. It glorified her beauty; and Henry could have scarcely restrained himself from kneeling down and worshipping her, in the madness of his devotion, if he could have done so and sustained his character as a driver. As it was, he had the reins in his hand and the horse to guide; but as he looked at Stella much more than the horse, he did upset her in a snow-bank, to her own mortification and the excessive merriment of the whole party. A sleigh-ride, without some one's getting a somerset in the snow, would be an anomaly; and as there is seldom any danger in such accidents, they only give a spring to mirth at the moment, and a subject for after jests.

The next morning, when Sherwood commenced his solitary ride, there was no smile on his lip, no radiance in his eye. He felt as if he were leaving all smiles and brightness behind him. Casting one glance to an upper window, where the folds of the curtain trembled, showing that some one was concealed by the drapery, he drew his hat over his brow and passed under the naked branches that bowed over the gate. He was obliged to take a road that curved round the back of the house, in consequence of the ruined bridge, quite an unfrequented path, where the snow was unusually deep. So completely was he absorbed in his own reflections, that he did not observe a light figure standing by the way-side, till he heard his name softly spoken, and looking up, he beheld Stella, enveloped in her cloak, with a small bundle in her hand.

“Will Mr. Sherwood Lindsey give me a seat in his sleigh, if it is not asking too great a favour?” asked she with an enchanting smile.

Vexed at being disturbed at a moment sacred to remembrance, astonished at her being abroad, when he had so recently bade her good-bye in the sitting-room, in her usual apparel, he nevertheless had too much habitual politeness to refuse a seat to a lady, who was standing ankle-deep in snow. Stella sprang in with a glow of triumph that neutralized the chill of the morning air. They rode on in silence a short distance, for Sherwood was too much displeased to enter into conversation. He had not forgotten the malignant glance he had arrested the preceding evening, and which the effulgence of her beauty rendered dazzlingly wicked, and the manner in which she forced herself upon him, after knowing his father's prohibition and his own promise, was bold and indelicate. It seemed sacrilege to the feelings he cherished for Rena to have Stella seated at his side, while Rena's parting tear was scarcely dried upon his cheeks, and the throbbings of her pure and loving heart yet warm upon his own. Finding that she did not give any evidence of a desire to stop, he asked rather impatiently,

“How far do you think of going this morning?”

There was something so cold and haughty in his manner, so different from his usual gentleness and courtesy, that the bold, intriguing girl began to think she might possibly have gone too far, and that he would refuse to co-operate with her in her wild purpose. But she hazarded nothing but the loss of his esteem, and she resolved to risk everything in the hope of success.

“Be not astonished, Sherwood,” said she, calmly; “when you know all my reasons, you will justify me. I wish to accompany you to the city, where I am determined to find a home, where the degraded name of the charity girl was never heard.”

"To the city!" exclaimed Sherwood, stopping his horse so suddenly, that it fell back on its haunches. "Are you mad, Stella? or do you think I am? What, in the name of reason and common sense, do you expect me to do with you, after you get there?"

"Nothing," cried she, proudly, stung to the soul by his disdain; "I only want your protection on the journey. When we arrive, I can take care of myself."

"Take care of yourself!" repeated he, "a fine self-guardian you would be, so young and inexperienced, in the heart of a great city! You know not what you are thinking of! I begin to think you are a candidate for the Insane Asylum!"

He looked inquiringly and anxiously in her face, to detect the symptoms of incipient insanity.

"No, Sherwood, I am not crazy. This is no sudden frenzy. I have long resolved to enter a milliner's establishment in the city, as soon as I had a fitting opportunity. I will not stay where I am only looked upon as the child of charity, the foundling of the almshouse. There I can make myself a name and fame too;" added she, her eyes kindling with anticipated admiration.

"Poor, deluded Stella!"—said Sherwood, in a kinder tone, for he felt intense pity for her infatuation—"relinquish your impracticable design, and return to the friends who have cherished you from your orphan infancy, and whose counsels will guide your unprotected youth. Once more, I say, make a friend of Rena, who would cherish you as a sister, if you would let her."

"Sherwood! you love Rena!" cried she, bitterly; "and you despise me, because I am poor!"

"I acknowledge the truth and the whole truth of your first assertion, and I glory in it! I do love Rena! I love her for her truth, goodness, and purity; her warm and generous heart; that heart which never felt for you any but the tenderest emo-

tions, and whose kindness you ungratefully spurn. I do not despise you, nor condemn your poverty. I did feel for you a brotherly interest and affection, Stella, which will revive the moment you recall your better nature. But what will people think of us, sitting here so long talking in the cold? I have a long day's journey before me. This is too ridiculous. Really, Stella, you must excuse me. Let me help you out of the sleigh."

Stella jumped out and turned upon him with the fierceness of a young panther, baffled of its prey. All her passions were excited and blazing in her breast.

"Then you will not take me!" she cried; "you cast me into the snow-drift, less cold than yourself! You have not the spirit of a man, and I despise you! You are cruel and selfish, and I hate you! You are afraid of your proud father, who turned me out of doors! You are afraid of the jealousy of a fond and passionate girl! There is not another young man in the world who would have slighted and scorned me thus! I know there is not!"

"I do not scorn you," repeated he, with a calmness that exasperated her more than the most angry reproaches would have done. "You will think of me hereafter with gratitude, and thank me for saving you from the consequences of your own rashness. Return, I beseech you, to the hospitable roof you have just quitted. Return, and make yourself worthy of the esteem of the excellent Aunt Debby; the just, the noble Colonel Fay; the tender and disinterested Rena. Farewell. May God bless you, and make you worthy of his blessing."

Thus gravely speaking, calm in youthful beauty, he bowed his head, drew the dark fur drapery of his sleigh more closely round him, lightly touched the neck of his spirited horse with his whip, and darted off, while the buffalo skin sweeping over

the back of the cutter, looked like the wing of an eagle floating near the earth.

Stella stood still a moment, gazing after him darkly, vindictively; then throwing herself down in the snow, she clutched it with her hands, like a desperate, impotent child.

"I will stay here and let them run over me!" said she to herself. "I don't care—I don't want to live—I hate myself and everybody else!"

Poor, sinful, undisciplined child of passion! "You don't want to live?" Can you quench the burning spark of vitality by burying your bosom in the snow-drift? Do you expect even by a change of existence to escape the tortures of your evil and goading thoughts? Do you think when you have no dull, clogging flesh, to impede your spirit's action, no sheath for your fiery nerves, no prison-cage for your wild passions; when you are given up, a bodiless soul, to their unchained fury, do you expect happiness and peace? Ungrateful child! you murmur at your lot of dependence and orphanage. We are all orphans—all exiles from our heavenly home. The earth is one vast almshouse, where the poor and needy are gathered together, sustained by a common benefactor, protected by a universal guardian; yet we all hunger after food that is not given to our craving lips—we all pant for waters which flow back from our burning thirst; we reject the bounties bestowed, and pine for those which are in mercy withheld. Like thee, rash girl, when disappointed in the fruition of our hopes, we fall into the impotence of despair, and exclaim—"we would not live!"—as if we could hurl back into the face of the Almighty Giver the glorious gift of immortality, and stifle, at our own will, the flame that eternity burns to renew.

Slowly and stiffly Stella rose, and shaking the snow from her cloak, turned her steps homeward. She entered the house by the back way, and had nearly reached her chamber, when she met Aunt Debby at a turning of the stairs. There was

such a strange expression in the pale face of the girl, that Aunt Debby stopped in alarm.

“Where have you been so early?” said she, observing the thick wreaths of snow that still clung to her dark cloak. “And what makes you look so pale? are you ill, child?”

“No,” answered Stella, petulantly; “I have been to take a walk! I am cold, that is all. Please, let me pass.”

She said *please*, but her tone was that of command; and with an air, which Aunt Debby did not think at all graceful or becoming, she swept by her, and hurried to her room.

“That girl has an evil spirit in her,” muttered Aunt Debby, as she went down stairs; “I do really think she has; there is a depth of cunning in her I can’t fathom, young as she is. I wish I had not brought her here. But Rena hung round me with her coaxing ways, and said, ‘Dear Aunt Debby, I pity her so much, she has no kind father and mother like me to welcome her to a Thanksgiving feast.’ Bless that kind little heart of hers, it carries all before it—All,” repeated she, in a dubious tone; “I hope it will, I hope it will.”

When Stella entered the room, she found Rena sitting by the fire in a dejected attitude. The expression of her face was sad, and there was a shadow round her eyes that showed she had been weeping. She knew the conditions her father had imposed on Sherwood, and though her heart did not rebel, it had a leaden weight upon it, that pressed it down more heavily than any other sorrow had done. She believed in Mr. Lindsey’s implacable pride, and thought if her union with Sherwood depended upon the bending of his iron will, it was a case of desperation. Still she was of too hopeful a nature to give up to despair, as she was too tender and confiding not to wish for sympathy. She knew she *had* sympathy; for her father had kissed her pale cheek and called her his darling again and again. Aunt Debby had tenderly caressed her, and told her it was all nonsense to feel sad at her time of life;

then adding, with a solemn voice, "to reserve her tears till his confidence was betrayed." But she longed for some youthful confidante, to whom she could unbosom all her feelings, and pour out the aching fulness of her love. If Stella were such a friend, with what eagerness would she turn to her, with what trust confide in her!

She lifted up her saddened eyes as Stella came near, and wondered, as Aunt Debby did, to see her in such a costume.

"Have you been walking, Stella?" said she, making room for her at the fire-side.

"I don't know what there is so strange if I have, that everybody should question me so closely," answered she, pulling impatiently at the strings of her cloak and hood.

"I did not think of offending you by asking," said Rena, gently. "You seem very cold; let me untie this string; your hands are numb; there, take my seat, it is the warmest."

Rena took Stella's snowy cloak and hung it over the back of a chair, and began to chafe her cold hands in hers, though Stella evidently tried to release them. She avoided Rena's soft, wistful eyes, and folded her arms round herself with a nervous shudder. Rena stood by her in silence, a few moments, then throwing her arms impulsively round her neck, she pressed her cheek on those glittering ringlets, fit only to encircle an angel's brow.

"Oh! Stella," she exclaimed, "close not up your heart against me. Let me love you, and love me back again. I feel so desolate just now. It seems as if I had lost all I love on earth, and I yearn for something to fill the aching void. I have been so happy these few days, so very happy. The world seemed a Paradise."

"Yes, Rena, I know you have been happy," replied Stella, gloomily, "and if I were in your place, I would be happy now. You have memory to live upon, I have nothing—nothing."

The reaction that follows great excitement, pressed heavily on Stella's spirits. Even a faint gleam of sympathy for Rena lighted up the darkness of her selfishness. Rena, dejected and alone, was very different from Rena gay and triumphant, sunning herself in Sherwood's beaming eyes.

And now Sherwood had so disdainfully shaken off the snare she had endeavoured to throw around him, she turned her thoughts to Henry, and determined to make him subservient to her designs. She could twist him into an easy and convenient tool. So, as reflection calmed the artful girl, and brought her back to a sense of her true condition, she thought it best to smooth her ruffled brow, dissemble her bitter disappointment, and return with false tenderness Rena's endearing caresses.

It was strange that Colonel Fay and Aunt Debby did not seem to fear her influence on Henry, but they had been so accustomed to look upon Henry as a girlish boy, they could not think of him as the lover of a girl; and they both were so deeply interested in Rena's prospects, so intent upon the cloud that darkened *them*, they suffered minor things to pass unheeded. Rena was the only one whose anxiety was awakened for Henry. She had so many contradictory feelings herself with regard to Stella, that she was bewildered and unhappy. Sometimes she distrusted and disliked her, then again she was attracted, charmed, and reproached herself, that she had not always loved her, and resolved that she never would suspect her truth. A glance perhaps, a smile, a certain indescribable something, would bring back distrust and fear and repulsion. Stella was an enigma which the single-hearted Rena tried in vain to solve.

CHAPTER XIV.

“ Oh ! stay thy hand, deluded one,
Oh ! stay thy hand ! ” she said ;
The gold is accursed that is not thy own,
’Twill burn like molten lead ! ”

BALLAD

“ WELCOME to Sunny Dell, Henry ! ” exclaimed Aunt Debby.
“ It is long since you have been my guest. ”

“ I can hardly call myself a guest, aunt, since I have to leave you so soon, ” replied the young collegian. “ To-morrow morning, long before sunrise, I must be away, for my holidays are over. ”

Henry had accompanied the travellers on their homeward journey, though by so doing he doubled the length of his own. Stella had hinted a wish for his companionship, and he would willingly have walked in the snow the whole distance if he could have secured a place near *her* at the same time.

Stella, who had by no means relinquished her bold design, watched her opportunity of speaking alone with Henry, and, unfortunately for him, it was thrown in her way so naturally as to escape observation. They were left together accidentally, and, fearful of interruption, she at once revealed to the astounded and infatuated boy her wild plans, and her confidence in his will and power to assist her. He had too little worldly wisdom to understand all the rashness of the enterprise, or the discredit it might reflect on himself. He was only awake to the incredible, the maddening idea that Stella was going with *him*, under *his* guardianship, going where he could have abundant opportunities of seeing her, and gazing on the beautiful

being who had absorbed all the rays of his heart. She enjoined on him the most perfect secrecy, promising to arrange everything for her own departure. He must bid his aunt and sister farewell before they retired to rest, as the stage started in the darkness of night, and he would not wish to disturb their repose.

Henry was so agitated by this disclosure he was obliged to take a long walk in the cold air, before his mind was composed enough to speak rationally. At supper, he committed so many blunders Rena looked at him in astonishment. He held out his tea-cup for a slice of butter, and poured ham-gravy, instead of cream, in a saucer of preserves. He blushed at his own awkwardness, wondering at the serene self-possession of Stella, who smiled at his mistakes and kindly rectified them.

It sometimes seems as if Providence smoothed the way in the path of the evil, and allowed them every facility for the accomplishment of their purposes; and man, in his blindness, might be tempted to believe that the great Power which permitted this combination of favouring circumstances, sanctioned their deeds. But sooner or later a day of reckoning comes, and the revealed angel of Providence justifies its dealings to the world.

As they all sat round the evening fire, a gentleman called on Aunt Debby, to pay her the interest of some money. He was her agent in business, and as she had considerable money at interest, it was a responsible situation.

“Rena, child,” said her aunt, when the man of business had retired, “take these bank-bills and put them in the little right-hand desk-drawer in your summer room. I am going to make you my treasurer and secretary. It is time you were learning business habits.”

Aunt Debby took a key suspended from a black cord, and hung it round Rena’s neck, who, telling her aunt she felt highly honoured by her confidence and would never abuse it,

ran up stairs and deposited the money in a small drawer, *within* the outside drawer, and after having locked it, she gave the handles a strong pull, to be certain she had secured it tight. This summer room of Rena's was situated on the north side of the house, and commanded a prospect of Bellevue and its lordly environs. It was separated from the chamber she now occupied, by a long passage. Aunt Debby slept in a bed-room below, so this apartment was left in its lone stillness, undisturbed by the echoes of the more busy part of the house. Perhaps it would have been wiser for Aunt Debby to have had her money placed in an occupied room, but that was emphatically the money-drawer, and a robbery had never been committed in that part of the world. She dreamed not of such a contingency.

As Rena passed Stella, with the roll in her hand, the latter was about to accompany her and hold the light for her, but something held her back and whispered she had better stay behind. The Tempter was at her elbow, his hissing tongue in her ear, his poison in her heart. All she wanted was money, to carry out her plans triumphantly. She had no fears on this account, when she hoped for the assistance of Sherwood, but the farmer's son might not be so liberally supplied, and she had been brooding over this want in deep anxiety. The child who secreted the golden pippins, and suffered the odium of the act to rest on her innocent companion, showed a moral obliquity as great as the girl of seventeen who meditated the midnight robbery, under the roof of a benefactress.

Aunt Debby proposed an early hour for retiring, as they were all weary, and Henry must get what sleep he could before his departure.

"Good-bye, my dear boy!" said Aunt Debby, taking his hand, and patting him affectionately on his head, her favourite love-token, "we shall all be asleep when you start, so we must bid you God-speed to-night. Make a man of yourself

this year, for it is your last in college. I'm glad to see you've cut off those dangling curls. Get a little wholesome brown on your cheek, and a little more iron *here*," transferring her hand from the head to the heart, "and you will get along. God bless you, Henry!"

Henry's heart swelled almost to bursting at his aunt's parting blessing. He felt that he did not deserve it. He was about to deceive her, and engage in an act, which, if known, would draw upon him her displeasure and that of all his friends. And when Rena put her arms round his neck, calling him her dear, darling, only brother, and kissing the good-bye her faltering lips refused to utter, the poor youth, burdened with his secret, could not repress the tears that he was ashamed of shedding. Stella, she too must bid him farewell, to avoid suspicion.

"Good-bye, Henry!" said she, pressing his cold hand, and giving him a dazzling glance, as she followed Rena's lingering steps.

The house was soon dark and still—dark, save a lamp left burning in the dining-room, for Henry's accommodation. Rena, completely overcome by fatigue, in consequence of having travelled the preceding night, fell asleep almost as soon as her cheek pressed the pillow. Stella, who had only partially undressed, wrapped her cloak around her, and sat down till Rena's slumbers deepened into a sound repose. Then rising, she purposely overturned a chair to test the depth of her sleep. Still the soft uniform breathing continued, and Stella, emboldened, took down the key Rena had hung from one of the knobs that supported the looking-glass, and wound the cord round her fingers. Everything had been still a long time in Aunt Debby's room, which was directly below; and at last, shading the light with one hand, so as to prevent its rays from flashing on the bed, she stole out of the room in her stocking-feet, and gliding through the long passage, en-

tered the chamber, the same chamber in which Rena had listened to Aunt Debby's thrilling story. There is something solemn in moving about in the silence of night, making a little narrow path through the darkness with a solitary lamp. One feels as if they were the only living, breathing thing on earth, and the beating of one's own heart has a loud, strange, and warning sound. If such are the emotions when a good and holy purpose calls one from the couch of rest, how must they be aggravated when crime is the incentive, and the shadow of guilt falls darkly behind?

Stella started and with difficulty suppressed a shriek, as passing the looking-glass, she beheld a white face, glittering eyes that shone like ignited steel, and a dark, shrouded form, skulking along by her side. She did not at first recognise herself, and recoiled as from a detecting ghost. At length her clammy hands turned the key, opened the drawers, and seized the money. Just in front of the desk she dropped a kid glove, which she drew from her bosom. It was small as a girl's, but on the margin was written a boy's name. It was Henry's, that she had stolen from his hat in the course of the evening. If Aunt Debby or Rena saw this token, they would believe *him* the robber, and from family pride or affection keep their lips sealed. So coolly, so deliberately, had this youthful offender planned and executed her first daring transgression. Slipping the money in her pocket, and avoiding the glass as she passed by, a new terror awaited her at the door. The arm-hole of her cloak caught in the latch, and she believed the avenger of sin was behind her. She heard the ticking of the clock down in the family sitting-room, and every stroke sounded as if "Thief! thief!" rung from its brazen tongue. "If I ever steal again," thought she, "I will never do it in the night—*never!*"

The guilty girl re-entered the chamber of sleeping innocence, and put back the key where Rena had hung it. Sweetly

as an infant Rena still slept, unconscious that the footsteps of crime were stealing near her.

Stella, whose trunk was down stairs, packed and ready, just as it was brought in from the journey, had no preparation to make. She was almost frozen, and scarcely could she keep her teeth from chattering under her icy lips. As she was about to extinguish the light, knowing she would find one burning in the room below, she cast a last glance on Rena's sweet and peaceful face. Softly, almost imperceptibly, the white sheet rose and fell to her gentle breathing, and softly the shadow of her long dark lashes fell upon her cheek. Stella contrasted the countenance before her with the one she had seen mirrored in the glass a few moments before, and a pang sharp as the stab of a stiletto cut right through her heart. "It is not too late. That anguish may be thy salvation yet. Return the money, unburden thy guilty conscience, lie down by the side of that virgin innocence, and let her virtues be transfused into thy own bosom. The recording angel has a blotting tear for thee. Return ! lost girl, return !" Thus appealed the guardian spirit, that had not yet forsaken her ; and even after she had quitted that charmed atmosphere, and sat crouching over the smouldering embers below, starting as the watch-dog howled or the chickens crowed, the "still, small voice" murmured in her ear—"Return ! return !"

The next morning when Rena arose, she saw, with astonishment, that the pillow of Stella was unpressed—the room bore no traces of her presence. She might have arisen and dressed, and descended without awaking her ; but the unruffled pillow was a mystery. She hurried through her toilet, and went down stairs as quickly as possible.

"Have you seen Stella?" asked she of the housemaid.

"Have you seen Stella?" asked she of Aunt Debby. The answer was still "No."

Breakfast came and passed, and nothing was seen of Stella.

At length they perceived that her trunk was gone, and a suspicion of the truth glanced into their minds. This suspicion assumed the character of certainty when they discerned the track of slender feet in the snow, by the side of Henry's, on the spot where the stage stopped. She had never spoken of her scheme of entering a milliner's establishment to them; and their only idea was, that she had eloped with Henry, mere boy as he was—ignorant as a girl of the arts of the world—whose weak mind she had misguided, whose young heart she had captured and led astray.

Rena was inconsolable at the thought of her brother's duplicity. She would not have grieved so much at Stella's flight, if she had fled with any one else; for, much as she had tried to love her, she could not help distrusting and condemning her. Aunt Debby's indignation was lofty, but Stella was the chief object.

"Poor, silly, weak boy!" she cried; "to be lured by a pair of pink cheeks and blue eyes, and a golden net! It is all her doings, the cunning, artful, specious young hussy! Poor baby! what will he do with her?—take her to college with him? It is the most astonishing, ridiculous thing I ever heard of. It is all nonsense—it is worse than nonsense; I must write to brother; he must see about the matter."

"Wait a little while, dear aunt," said Rena; "she may not have gone with him, after all. She is such a strange girl! she may have gone to some of the families where she has lived. Let us send and inquire."

Before night, a countryman called who had just returned from the city, where he had executed some commands for Aunt Debby. Of course he had met the stage, and it chanced that it stopped to change horses at the inn where he was resting his own. He told her, in answer to her eager inquiries about the passengers, "that there was one of the prettiest young men he ever saw in his life, and the prettiest young girl

he ever did see, with hair like dripping dandelions all frisking about her face, and that they seemed desperately taken with each other."

"I will write to brother this moment!" cried Aunt Debby. "But stop, Rena, pay the man what money I owe him; you are my treasurer, you know."

Rena obeyed her aunt, her heart for the first time swelling with indignation against her brother for thus disappointing his noble father's hopes. As she put the key in the drawer, she spied the glove on the floor, and picking it up, read his name upon it.

"How came Henry's glove here?" exclaimed she; "it is very, very strange!"

She felt faint and sick at the sight of that glove. She could not account for her awful sensations; she could not bear to open the drawer, the key trembled in her hand. Recollecting that the man was waiting for his money, and that it was foolish to allow such a trifle to affect her so, she unlocked the drawer.

"Gone!" cried she, sinking down in a chair, trembling like the mimosa plant.

"Gone!" she repeated, clenching the glove in agony. "He did not take it! No, he did not take it—no, no!" she kept saying; for it seemed to her there were jeering voices all round the room, whispering deridingly, "He did, he did!"

As Rena stayed so long, and the countryman was waiting, Aunt Debby grew impatient, and came up to see what was the matter; for Rena's steps were usually fleet as a fawn's. She found her in a chair by the side of the desk, her face as hueless as marble, and such a look of anguish in her eyes as she never saw before.

"Rena, my child, what ails you?" she cried, going up and laying her hand quickly on her shoulder.

Rena looked wildly at her, clenching the glove to her breast;

"He did not take it," she exclaimed; "Oh no, aunt, he never, never took it!"

Aunt Debby beheld the empty drawer, and associating Rena's frantic asseveration with the glove she convulsively grasped, she said, in a tone of forced calmness,

"Give me that glove, Rena, and tell me where you found it."

"No, no," cried she, pressing it closer, and trying to hide it entirely in her clasp. "Don't, dear aunt, for mercy's sake, don't take it from me. He did not drop it there himself."

But Aunt Debby did take it, though, in the act, she tore the margin from the other part, which remained in the fingers which would not unclose. She read the name distinctly printed on the white kid inside. She looked at it steadily, till the blood left her face, leaving even her lips colourless.

"It is not the money," she said, slowly, "but the disgrace—the shame—the crime. Henry Fay, my brother's son—my nephew—your brother, a thief! a vile thief! and all for that girl—that ungrateful, artful girl! Don't speak to me, child—not one word! I must think—I must think what to do."

She put her hand to her forehead and knit her brows, labouring in thought.

"But the man is waiting for his money," said she with a sudden transition of manner, for which she was remarkable; "thank heaven, I have a plenty left."

Then opening a small drawer on the left hand, corresponding to the one which she called her "interest drawer," she took out the sum required, locked it, and hung the key round Rena's neck. Rena caught it off as if it was a cord of fire.

"Take it back! why did you ever intrust me with it? If it had not been for that, it never would have been taken."

Aunt Debby had already left the room to discharge her debt, which having done, she sat down immediately to her

writing-desk. Rena found her bending over the paper, her pen making rapid and decisive movements. She went up and laid her hand pleadingly on her arm—

“Please let me speak one word, aunt. You are writing to father! Pray do not tell him of this now—for, as I believe in the God that made me, I know Henry could not have taken that money.”

“The money is gone, and his glove lying by the desk,” said Aunt Debby, coldly. “What could he do with that girl without money? He had only enough to pay his college expenses. I remember now his trepidation and blunders in the evening. Guilt, guilt—cowardice and shame! My brother must know it.”

Resuming her bending position, the scratching of her pen on the paper was like the stroke of a knife on Rena’s heart. She thought of the agony it would inflict on her high-minded and trusting father. She remembered the death-bed of her mother, when, turning her dying eyes on herself, and clasping her hand in one on which the dew of dissolution was already gathered, she committed her brother to her sisterly tenderness and care. “Oh, Rena,” murmured the expiring woman, “watch over him. He is too gentle, too yielding to take care of himself. I have made him weak; I have done wrong. May God forgive me, and save my darling boy from evil!” Rena remembered all this, and she felt that she had thrown temptation in his path, in the form of the beautiful charity girl. If he had committed this shameful deed, it was, it must have been, at Stella’s instigation. He might be led into sin through the weakness his mother deplored. He could not think evil from his own untempted nature.

She could not stand by and see her aunt writing the history of his infamy without a struggle. Her only thought was to save her father from sorrow, her brother from shame. She threw herself on her knees before her aunt, she arrested the

hand that guided the pen, and entreating her to spare him, wept and sobbed in passionate grief. Aunt Debby laid down her pen, and putting her arms tenderly round the weeping girl, addressed her in solemn, soothing accents :

“Do you think I do not suffer, child? Do you think my nature is impassive? I am not going to expose Henry to the world. Far be from me such a thought. Regard for the family honour, if not for him, would prevent me. But I must do my duty. His father must know his conduct, must follow him and save him from himself. I pity the poor, deluded boy! pity him more than I condemn. He was exposed to the wiles of a serpent, subtle as the one that tempted the mother of mankind. Do you want him to remain in her coils?”

“Oh, no, I see you are right, aunt. You will not expose him to the world—that is kind—Sherwood will never know it then!” burst from her lips.

“I would not have the Hon. Herbert Lindsey know that one of the name of Fay had disgraced himself in this manner,” exclaimed Aunt Debby, with one of her old flashes of passion; “I would not, for all the kingdoms of earth and the glory of them. Be assured this stigma shall not be known beyond the family, unless,” she added, “you excite suspicion by your stormy emotions.”

“I will be calm, aunt,” she replied, “I will not shed another tear.”

“Go and wash your face, comb your hair, and take a walk. Dismiss the subject. We had better not speak of it again at present. Learn self-control, my child; it is one of the first lessons we need—the last we learn. Poor pupils that we are! How little we profit by the discipline of suffering!”

Rena obeyed her aunt, and suppressed as far as possible all outward demonstrations of sorrow; but her happiness had received a terrible blow, one for which there was no remedy.

She waited with feverish impatience to hear from her father, but it would be some time before they could look for an answer to Aunt Debby's letter, as he would doubtless start immediately after his son, and not write till he could tell the result of the interview. Slowly and heavily the days dragged after each other. One of those cold, dismal north-east storms set in, that often sweep over the northern Atlantic coasts, and penetrate the very marrow of the bones. We have described some of the pleasures, the exhilarations, the glories of a hyperborean winter. We have given the lights, but truth requires us to introduce the shadows also. The snow-storm on Thanksgiving eve, it is true, might pass for one, but that was an April gust, compared to this long, bleak, chilling north-easter. The sleet drove against the windows and shook the panes, leaving behind a dull crust, impeding the passage of the dim rays that struggled for admittance. It mixed with the dark red pine bark, with which the house was embanked, and left a dismal-looking discolouration on the grayish paint. It beat against the listed doors, and came headlong down the chimneys of the unoccupied rooms. The snow no longer wore its tint of unsullied whiteness, but assumed a dingy hue, and little, ragged-looking twigs broken off from the naked branches, as the wind rattled through them, gave it a slovenly, desolate aspect. Sometimes a poor little snowbird would peck at the window, and Rena would take it in, and nestle it on her bosom, only to sigh over its last, expiring pang. If there had been peace within, Rena could have triumphed over the desolation abroad—she could have wandered in fairy land and found green bowers, and sweet blossoms enough of her own, to make her independent of all of which winter had robbed her. But within, as without, was gloom. Rena saw that her aunt suffered, and she endeavoured heroically to rise above her own depression, that she might cheer and interest her. She knit strenuously, an occupation whose monotony was

always distasteful to her; assisted her in quilting a large star bed-quilt, another task she especially disliked; read to her, sung for her;

“But nothing could a charm impart”

to soothe her own restless and wounded spirit. At length, the gilded top of the arrow that surmounted the stable veered towards the west, and the clouds went drifting after it. The sun burst forth gloriously, and the sleet that covered the undulating surface of the snow, shone like billows of glass. With an exultant feeling of liberation, a sense of renewed joy in existence, Rena bounded into the sunshine, and forgetting for awhile every source of sorrow, told Aunt Debby that she felt “as if she could skate all over the world!”

It was not many days before a letter arrived from Colonel Fay. While the aunt and niece are absorbed by its contents, we will relate the incidents it records.

CHAPTER XV.

“Beautiful tyrant! fiend angelical—
Dove-feathered raven: wolf-devouring lamb!
Oh! serpent heart hid in a flowering cave!
Did e'er deceit dwell in so fair a mansion?”

ROMEO AND JULIET.

“For thee, rash girl! no suppliant sues—
For thee may vengeance claim her dues,
Who, nurtured underneath our smiles,
Hast paid our care with treacherous wiles.”

LADY OF THE LAKE.

WE will not attempt to describe the feelings of Colonel Fay, on the reception of his sister's letter. It arrived about the commencement of the storm, whose blasts swept all

along the north-eastern shores of the Atlantic. He felt for the first time the influence of those blasts on his athletic frame. The cold water with which he was saturated Thanksgiving eve, seemed still lingering in the pores of his system, producing occasional chillness and pain. But he had scarcely perused the letter, before he ordered his sleigh, and resisting all the pleadings of his wife to wait for the subsiding of the storm, commenced his melancholy journey. He felt not the benumbing wind, the driving sleet; all physical suffering was forgotten in the anguish of the mind.

It was a day's journey; but, as he started in the after part of the day, he was obliged to travel during the night, and arrived at his son's lodgings in the morning. Henry was alone in his room, poring over the pages of a *Græca Majora* with his eyes, while his thoughts were wandering to a form of bewildering loveliness, when the door opened and his father stood before him, pale, sorrowful, and stern. He started up, his face crimsoned with shame. He knew of but one offence, and the bashful boy trembled and blushed, fearing that his father had discovered the secret of his heart, and had probably come to upbraid him for his folly.

"Where is the young girl you have taken from her friends?" said his father, in his usual straightforward, downright manner. But this manner, generally softened by tenderness when addressing any member of his family, was now severe and cold. The double offence of which he supposed his son guilty, was enough to excite parental indignation. Still, he wished to draw him gradually to a full confession; and had he been aware of the sternness of his countenance, he would have endeavoured to mitigate it.

"I left her at an hotel in the city, before I came out here," answered Henry, with a stammering tongue.

"And how came you to take this disgraceful and unwarrantable step, young man—beardless boy, as I should say? How

came you to decoy a young girl from my sister's protection, and throw her into the heart of a corrupt city? I did not think a son of mine would be guilty of an act like this."

"I am very, very sorry," again stammered Henry; "I feared you would be angry; but I did not decoy her, father—she asked me to take charge of her, and I could not well refuse. She did not wish her friends to know of her going, for they would have opposed it. She is going into a milliner's shop."

There was such an ingenuous expression in Henry's face as he uttered these simple truths, notwithstanding his burning blushes at the consciousness of the rapture he felt under the guardianship imposed, that Colonel Fay could not but place implicit reliance on his statement. One great burden was removed, but the robbery—the mystery of the glove! He approached the subject with fear and caution. After rebuking his son for committing a clandestine act, which had caused his friends so much anxiety, and exposed him to censure and obloquy—after blaming the rash and imprudent girl who had led him into the temptation, he asked—

"Henry, do you remember losing a pair of gloves the evening you left Sunny Dell?"

"I did not exactly lose them," answered he, with renewed embarrassment.

"What became of them, then? Be candid,—a great deal may depend on your confession."

"They were taken from my hat in the course of the evening,—but it was only in sport, father."

"By whom?—tell me all the circumstances without prevarication!"

"Stella took them in play, just to tease me."

"Did you see her take them?—did she do it before your face?"

"I cannot conceive what importance you attach to a com-

mon pair of gloves. She will return them, if I ask her. She did it in stealth, but I saw her in the glass, the opposite side of the room. I am sure I do not see any harm in it,—an innocent trick, such as Rena would play. Please don't be angry with her for such a trifle as that."

"It may be a trifle in itself, but great consequences are involved in it!" said the Colonel, deliberately fixing his clear, penetrating eye on the gloomy face of his son. "One of those gloves was found, the day after you left, lying right in front of your aunt's desk, from which some daring hand had taken all the money confided the night before to your sister's care! That trifle, as you call it, fixes the crime on you! Tell me, as you will abide by the consequences, before the judgment bar of God,—tell me, while you look me, your father, steadfastly in the eye, are you guilty, Henry, or not?"

"What, *I!*—*I* rob my *aunt*?—*I* steal, and from my *own* *aunt*? Oh! father, how can you believe me guilty of such an awful crime?"

All the time that he was speaking, his earnest, beautiful dark eyes were fixed upon his father, with the security of conscious innocence. Then the tears gathered slowly, in large drops, and began to roll down his cheeks. His knees knocked together, and sinking in a chair, he covered his face with his hands and sobbed convulsively.

"And does my aunt," cried he, "and does Rena believe me guilty? Do they think I could be so base, so wicked? Father—you do not speak! You cannot think your son, my mother's son, could curse you by such an act?"

"No, Henry, I cannot, I could not, though the evidence, the circumstantial evidence is strong enough to convict you in a court of justice. It is evident who *is* the criminal—the unprincipled girl, who lured you into an act of imprudence, and who artfully stole your gloves, to fasten this guilt on you."

"Oh, no, father, she is innocent—I know she is!"

"How came your glove there, then?"

"It was dropped there by accident, indeed it was. I would suspect an angel of such a thing, as soon as Stella."

"Then it was your sister."

"Father."

"Henry, I say it was either yourself, that girl, or your own sister. The money is gone. It was placed under your sister's care. Your glove was found near the empty drawer. Your gloves were abducted by the girl the same evening. Now, assume the guilt yourself, fasten it on your sister, or let it rest on her, who is, I firmly believe, the true criminal."

"Some robber must have broken in the house," gasped Henry, appalled by the shadows that were darkening round him.

"Give me the direction of the girl," said the Colonel; "she must be examined."

"Oh! father, have mercy! It will kill her, if you accuse her of such a crime. If I *could* lie in the face of my Maker, I would say I took it, rather than you should suspect *her* of such a thing."

"Is she dearer to you than your own honour, or the honour of your family?"

"I should die if she suffered wrong at my father's hands," he answered, in a tone of indescribable anguish.

"Have you ever known me cruel or unjust, my son?" said the Colonel, overcome with pity for his unhappy son.

"Never, sir, forgive me; but I hardly know what I am saying."

"Write her direction on this slip of paper," said he, placing one before his son, "and be assured that I will proceed in this matter with as much delicacy and forbearance as it is possible to use. I shall rejoice as much as yourself to prove her innocence. Henry, do not make any unnecessary delay. It was for no child's play that I confronted a blast like this."

Henry traced the lines with fingers, that were not conscious of their own motion.

“Be gentle with her, my father. Be gentle, for my sake!” said he, grasping his father’s hand, and pressing upon it his feverish brow.

“I will, my son, I will. Now resume your studies, and be ready for the recitation hour. And remember, if I should return with convincing proofs of her guilt, I shall expect from the purity of your heart, and the past uprightness of your character, a full surrender of all interest in one so utterly unworthy.”

Henry’s only answer was another pressure of his father’s hand, but he was strong in his conviction of Stella’s innocence. His anguish was for the outrage that was to be inflicted upon it.

When Colonel Fay inquired at the hotel for the young girl Stella Lightner, and was told no person of that name was there, he began to tremble for his son’s truth. But at length he learned from a head servant that the person who bore that name had been there, but was now with a fashionable milliner by the name of Modely. The Colonel took down the new direction, and after winding about various streets, he found the shop of the milliner. He entered, but looked in vain behind the counter, for the beautiful face of the charity girl. There was a glass door that divided the shop from a back parlour, partly shaded by a green silk curtain. Through this, he caught a glimpse of a profusion of sunny curls, and a profile of pure, classic beauty, which could belong to no other face than Stella’s. She turned her eyes towards the door, those star-bright eyes, and immediately recognised, with a thrill of horror, the tall, commanding figure of Colonel Fay. The needle dropped from her hand—the work fell from her lap; then starting, she gathered it up and retreated to the remotest corner of the apartment, hoping she had escaped the observation she so much dreaded.

In the mean time the Colonel addressed the lady who

seemed to preside in the shop, and requested an interview with the young girl—a private interview if possible.

“Do you know her, sir?” asked the lady, drawing him one side, so that her remarks could not be heard by the apprentice girls behind the counter.

“I have known her from a child,” was the reply.

“She has been with me but a short time,” she continued, “and as she came without any recommendations, I have been in doubt about the propriety of taking her. Her youth and remarkable beauty interested me, and the skill she manifested in needle-work when put upon trial, showed that she would be a valuable acquisition to my establishment.”

The lady, who seemed gratified that so gentleman-like a person as the Colonel was acquainted with her young protégée, called Stella, who came forward with ill-concealed reluctance, and leading the way to a private parlour, showily and fashionably furnished, left them together.

“You have taken a very extraordinary step, young lady,” said the Colonel, in a grave voice. “It was rash and unadvised.”

Stella breathed more freely, believing that it was to censure her for making his son a partner in her flight, that he had honoured her with a visit. For that venial offence she was ready to justify herself, secure that the darker secret of her crime was unrevealed.

“I have found a respectable home,” she replied, “where I shall not be taunted with my poverty, and the situation from which I was taken. They will not know and despise me as a low charity girl, unless you tell them, sir, who I am, and rob me of the patronage I have obtained.”

Colonel Fay felt the peculiarity and delicacy of his situation painfully. He was a man of unusual tenderness and gentleness of character in his intercourse with women; and here was a young girl of angelic beauty and heavenly innocence of ap-

pearance, whom he was come to accuse of one of the most degrading of crimes. Had it been murder, committed by the frantic hand of passion, it would have been less opprobrious and revolting. When with his son, and he had convinced himself of her guilt, he had armed himself with sufficient indignation to convict her face to face of the sinful deed she had done; but when he looked upon her his purpose faltered. With Henry he believed it was impossible. Deliberate wickedness never could clothe itself in a garb so fair. He walked about the room irresolute and troubled. He knew not what to do. If he told her of the loss of the money, and asked her to allow her trunk to be examined, to vindicate her innocence, she might leave the room to hide the bills before he had an opportunity of searching it. It would put her on her guard, and effectually baffle his attempts to fathom the mystery. Were it merely the *money* that was in question, he would far rather have paid its value from his own purse, than mention his suspicions; but his son's character was at stake, and it must be cleared. He had only his own word *for*, against the most powerful evidence. If innocent, he must be acquitted; if guilty, condemned.

While revolving these weighty thoughts, Stella watched him with the most intense anxiety. She could not bear the intolerable suspense caused by his silence and troubled movements. She rose, saying she thought Mrs. Modely would be displeased if she remained longer from her work, and was leaving the room, when, having recalled a portion of his moral courage, he went up to her, and taking her hand said—

“We may be intruded on in this parlour. Take me to your own private room. I have that to say to you which no ears but your own ought to hear.”

“I have no room of my own,” she cried, her whole face suffused with the deepest crimson. “I share the chamber of another girl. I am sure this parlour is retired enough,” added

she, assuming a haughty air. "No gentleman would insist upon greater privacy."

"Stella, you must take me to your own room, or I must speak to Mrs. Modely on the subject that brought me here. If you wish, she can be present; but for your own sake, I would advise not."

"I will not go with you, sir. You have no right to ask it. You can have nothing to say to me that the whole world may not hear. Let go my hand, sir, you hurt me."

It is probable that the strong hand of the Colonel did hurt the slender fingers he grasped so tightly, but he was excited by her resistance, and the difficulty of the undertaking called forth a more determined and vigorous will.

"Stella," said he, without releasing her, "I would not be harsh or unkind, unless you force me to be so. If you value your present situation, come with me, and I will treat you as gently as if you were my own daughter. My age sanctions the liberty I ask."

Trembling, panting with suppressed rage and fear, Stella looked round as if she would jump through the windows, rather than yield submission to his requirement. He had gradually drawn her to the door of the shop, where Mrs. Modely met them, her countenance animated with curiosity.

"Excuse me, madam," said he, "if I appear to ask an unusual liberty. I wish to speak with this young girl in her own room. As I have just told her, my age sanctions the freedom, as well as my motive. Will you permit her to show me the way?"

"It is a strange request," replied Mrs. Modely, looking with doubt and astonishment at Stella, who was scarlet one moment, and snow-white the next; "she seems very much agitated, I know not what to think of it."

"She has some important papers in her trunk which I wish to examine, which it is necessary that I should. If you will

have the goodness to have it brought into the parlour, and see that we are uninterrupted for a short time, I should prefer it."

"Certainly, certainly," replied the lady, "that is a much better arrangement." She resolved that she would apply her ear to the key-hole, and learn the mystery of a visit, evidently so unwelcome to Stella.

Stella dared not resist, before the curious eyes bent upon her in the shop, but when she found herself again in the parlour, she burst into a passion of tears, and declared that he never should look in her trunk; she would not submit to such an insult, she would die first. The trunk was brought in—the door closed, a listening ear applied to the key-hole. The Colonel, whose courage was now equal to the occasion, took both her hands and forcibly seated her.

"Stella," he cried, "be calm, and listen to reason. I will now tell you what I wish to discover. A robbery was committed at Sunny Dell, on the night of your departure. The clandestine manner in which you left, has thrown suspicion on you. My sister has authorized me to investigate the matter. If you are innocent, an examination of your trunk ought to inspire no dread. I suffer great pain in wounding your feelings. I would gladly have spared you this trial, if I could."

"Cruel, cruel and unjust!" cried Stella, wringing her hands, and looking distractedly round her, "why should I do it more than your own son? why accuse me more than him?"

"I have accused him, and he denies it. I sought him first. I did not spare my own son."

"Does *he* dare to say that I took it? Has *he* the cowardice to accuse *me*—a girl?" she cried, with a look of insufferable scorn.

"No, he stakes his life upon your innocence, and I, Stella, would give twenty times this sum to prove you so, this moment. Give me the key, and clear yourself at once of suspicion."

"Never—I will die first!"

"Then I must force it open," laying his powerful hand upon the lid.

Stella sprang forward and threw herself across the trunk, desperately, fiercely. All the animal in her was roused. With her long, waving hair floating wildly over her, her head partly raised, her eyes flashing like poniards, and her lips parted, showing her glittering teeth, she looked like a young lioness, confronted in her native wilderness. The Colonel was baffled. He could have faced the lions of the Indian forests with a more undaunted spirit than this slender girl. Of her guilt he had no longer a doubt. To obtain the proofs of it, so as to clear his son, seemed an Herculean task.

"Stella, unhappy girl," said he, "I know your guilt! do not seek to hide it. There was one who saw the deed, whom you cannot escape, whose justice you cannot elude."

"Who saw me?" she exclaimed, springing up with a bound; "who saw me? there was no one there. It is false, there was no one there."

"Yes! self-convicted criminal," said he, in a solemn voice, raising his hand slowly upward, and pointing towards Heaven, "God was *there*—he saw you. God is *here*—his awful eye is on you now. He sees into the depths of your heart. He sees its fear, its agony, and, oh! may he see its remorse! Confess now, child of sin—confess your crime, restore the money, and I will not expose your shame. I will not blast your young life by telling the story of your infamy. Let the anguish you now suffer be a foretaste of those undying pangs which await the impenitent and unpardoned sinner. Make the only atonement left, by restoring what, if kept, will burn your conscience with consuming fire."

The solemnity of his manner, the awful force of his language, the imposing dignity of his attitude, the consciousness that her own words had admitted the crime, the conviction that she was entirely in his power, and that a call for help

would only expose her shame to others, all pressed upon her so crushingly she had no strength or resistance left. When Colonel Fay bent down and took the black silk ribbon, from which a key was suspended, from her neck, her nerveless hands fell passive at her side ; she bowed forward and fell prostrate on the floor, like one in a collapsed state. She had not fainted, she had only given up in despair. She heard the key turn, the trunk open, she felt that the bills were in the Colonel's hand, though her face was pressed against the floor. She heard the key again turn, the trunk closed, and felt the ribbon encircle her neck.

Colonel Fay was now in possession of indubitable evidence of her guilt. His sister, who was remarkable for the methodical manner in which she transacted business, always had the initials D. W. marked on the back of her bank notes in red ink. Her agent never failed to attend to this sign, before placing them in her hands. Every note bore this blood-red symbol. And near them, too, was the fellow of the glove found in front of the desk—at least he supposed so, for there was an odd glove, bearing the name of his son. The stigma was removed from his family, but the guilt of this youthful orphan weighed heavily on his heart. She had been under his roof, and sat down at his board ; she had been the companion of his children, the protégée of his sister.

“I will not add to your sufferings by useless reproaches,” said he, trying to raise her prostrate form. “You see that the path of sin is strewn with thorns, that the way of the transgressor is hard. I will not leave you penniless, nor will I reveal to the lady, whose protection you have sought, this shameful transaction. Perhaps I ought to put her on her guard, but I cannot close upon you the doors of hope, for there is hope, Stella—hope in repentance, reformation, and expiation.”

“I thank you, sir, for your good advice to the young lady

and I hope she will profit by it," cried Mrs. Modely, suddenly opening the door; "but she is not to be left under my roof, I can assure you. I overheard enough just now, as I was coming in, to know what she is, and I am not going to harbour a *thief*, to destroy the reputation of my establishment. I thought it was strange that she had no recommendations. I suppose she thought her pretty face was sufficient. To try to deceive *me*, in this shameless manner. I tell you what, Miss, the sooner you leave my house the better."

"Take me to prison, sir," said Stella, in a tone of bitterness and despair; "I have no home to go to!"

"Come with me, poor outcast," said the Colonel, "I will carry you back to the friends you have deserted, and who are still ignorant of your crime."

"No, oh, no, not to Aunt Debby—I dare not—I cannot—I would rather die at once!"

"You have but one choice left—either to go into the streets in the wind and sleet, or to accept the protection I am willing to afford you."

He spoke calmly, resolutely, and the wretched girl seeing indeed no alternative, went to her room to prepare herself for the journey.

"Excuse me, sir," said Mrs. Modely; "I must follow her and see that she does not steal anything from *me*."

"Speak not, I entreat you, of this unhappy affair, madam. Have pity on her youth."

"Certainly, sir," said she, hurrying away, to watch the detected culprit.

In silence and shame Stella followed her merciful judge to the sleigh, where her trunk was already deposited, while the apprentice girls, whose envy her beauty had excited, looked after her with scorn and contempt.

The Colonel stopped at the hotel long enough to write a note to his son, informing him of the discovery he had made, and his conviction that his infatuation could not survive the

knowledge of Stella's worthlessness. He also wrote to his sister, telling her of what he had done, and of his wish that she would make some arrangement with the ladies of the charitable association, to receive Stella, of whose crime they were not aware, and who might be forgiven for the youthful imprudence of taking a flight to the city, under apparently favourable auspices.

The journey was cold and comfortless. Stella listened in sullen silence to the kind and earnest counsels of this excellent man. If anything could have redeemed her, it would have been an influence so pure and holy, acting upon her, from the highest, most disinterested of motives. And while with him, while his mild, persuasive accents were murmuring in her ears, she did resolve to abstain from crime, to avoid all *appearance* of evil, she even had some heart-yearnings after goodness, and wished that heaven had given *her* a father as good to watch over her. But she did not go down to the depths of her heart, to strangle the scorpions brooding there. She had been so accustomed to dwell on evil thoughts, it had become the *habit* of her life. Habit! whose iron chains require an unshorn giant's strength to break. Habit! that indelible dye of the soul, which is compared, in the language of inspiration, to the Ethiopian's skin and the leopard's spots.

She was ashamed of the detection, rather than the crime; she mourned for the consequences of the guilt, not the guilt itself. She shuddered at the dark shadow, more than the black reality.

Colonel Fay did not carry her to Sunny Dell, but left her at an inn, while he went to ascertain from his sister what home would open to receive her. It was her doom to be placed again under the surveillance of Mrs. Brown, from whose house she had a glimpse of the almshouse, her early abode. There we will leave her for the present, grieved to have recorded such proofs of depravity in one whom God had created so fair.

CHAPTER XVI.

“’Tis long since I beheld that eye,
That gave me bliss or misery,
And I have striven, but in vain,
Never to think of it again.”

“Yes! ’tis a glorious thought to me,
Nor longer shall my soul repine—
Whate’er thou art, or e’er shalt be,
Thou hast been dearly, solely mine.”

BYRON.

SINCE the record of Stella’s transgression, we have allowed the stream of time to flow on for a while, without any register of the events that marked its course. But it did flow, bearing on its swift current human hopes and joys and fears. The wind-blown blossom, the green leaflet, the broken branch, and the uprooted tree—all were drifted along on the tide that, unrefluent and unebbing, rolls on to the ocean of eternity. It rushes on, leaving many a gallant bark and stately vessel wrecked upon its waves, but pauses not for the shriek of the drowning or the moan of the surviving. But all is not desolation and ruin where its billows dash! Green islets, like emerald gems, sparkle on its waters, new-born flowers margin its shores, and other barks, with snowy sails and gallant crew, leave their glittering wake on the swelling flood.

Winter and summer, seed-time and harvest came and went, and the principal characters in our drama of life experienced but little change in themselves or surrounding circumstances. The inflexible pride of the Hon. Mr. Lindsey remained unbent—his ambition, as towering as ever. Sherwood had

finished the reading, and commenced the practice of law. He felt himself an independent being; and, could he have obtained Colonel Fay's consent to a union with Rena, in spite of the opposition of his father, he would have braved his displeasure, and dared the penalty of disinheritance and banishment from the paternal roof. He had visited Rena at Sunny Dell—for Aunt Debby no longer issued her ban at the threshold; but the long hours of absence, unrelieved by written communications, were becoming more and more intolerable. Sherwood chafed under his father's despotic pride and Colonel Fay's inexorable sense of justice; and Rena began to feel that if love had its sunlight, it had its shadow also.

Aunt Debby, around whose softening heart Rena had twined herself closer and closer, making the once waste place green and blossoming with new-born affections, beheld with sorrow the dejection that succeeds baffled hope settling on the spirits. She dwelt upon the subject more and more, and again and again the thought returned to her, that if she saw Herbert Lindsey herself, she might possibly awaken in his heart, cold and worldly as it might be, one spark of nature, one feeling of sympathy, for the youthful attachment of his son. She would claim it as an atonement for her own unexpiated wrongs. She knew he could not have forgotten all remembrance of his life's romance; he had once loved her. Shamefully as he had deserted, cruelly as he had wronged, he had once loved her; and she knew, by her own heart's ineffaceable memories, that time could not obliterate the impressions of youth. They might be overgrown, obscured by cares and sins and worldliness, but let a bold hand sweep aside the rank luxuriance, the engraven characters would once more reappear.

Aunt Debby, too, was more and more deeply impressed with a sense of her responsibility to God and her obligations to man, as a part of the great brotherhood of humanity. She

felt her own need of forgiveness as a fallible and sinning mortal; and when she bent her knee in prayer, to supplicate pardon for herself, the words often trembled on her lips, from the consciousness that the wrongs inflicted on herself were unpardoned, and often remembered with vindictive bitterness. Perhaps (for the heart is a strange and complicated thing!) a lingering desire to speak once again to the man she had loved with such impassioned tenderness, and whose fascinations resisted the power of time, mingled with her more disinterested feelings. She could not go to Bellevue, and ask admission to its haughty master, but should he chance to cross her path, perhaps she might "open her lips in parables and utter dark sayings of old."

Aunt Debby was kind to the sick and afflicted, but she always tried to do them good by stealth. As we have said before, she was ashamed of being thought too amiable; and though she was gradually conquering this shame, the habit of concealing her good deeds as much as possible remained. She loved to go alone, when she sought their dwellings, and to walk through the most retired paths and most unfrequented roads.

One afternoon, late in the autumnal season, she was returning from a visit to a poor sick woman, who lived on the road running back of Bellevue. It was a lonely and untravelled path; and even in the depth of summer, when everything wears a bright and glowing aspect, this shaded and solitary road was one which a mourner might seek, as congenial to his melancholy contemplations. Now, the trees were tinged with autumn's prophetic gold, and here and there a fallen leaf, sere and russet, breathed its moral to the heart. The grass, instead of yielding, like soft velvet, noiselessly to the pressure, crumpled under the foot, that broke as it touched the brittle blades. A smoky haze dimmed the atmosphere, so that the blue outline of the distant hills was scarcely distin-

guished from the horizon on which they rested. It was in this lone path, with her mind solemnized by the sight of human suffering, and by reflections on the fading glory of the year, that Aunt Debby, who was walking slowly along, with her eyes bent upon the ground, became aware, by some internal evidence, that some one was approaching, for it was neither by signs or sound, so deeply was she abstracted, and looking up, she beheld the well-remembered face and form of Herbert Lindsey. He was himself absorbed in meditation, and merely noticed that a woman was in the path before him. He knew not who that woman was till he was very near, and felt her deep black eyes riveted upon him, not in scorn and vengeance, as he had sometimes met them, but with a solemn earnestness of expression that strangely impressed him. He was so close that her rustling dress might have touched him, and he involuntarily paused, arrested by the spell of that prophet-like glance, when, recollecting himself, he touched his hat with his hand and was passing on.

“Herbert Lindsey!” said she, and her voice, mellowed by the memories that came rushing in upon her, sounded like a strain of long-forgotten music. She hardly recognised it herself, so different was it from the tones of the mistress of Sunny Dell. “Herbert Lindsey! we have met before. Perhaps we may not meet again till the day when you and I shall read each other’s hearts in the light of God’s eternal day. I would speak with you one moment.”

The sound of a voice which had so long been dead to him, addressing him, too, by his youthful name, caused a quick vibration of the nerves and a sudden rush of blood to his unusually pale face. Had she spoken to him in a harsh, indignant tone, he would have wrapped the mantle of his pride more closely round him and passed coldly by. But the suddenness of the appeal, the solemn words she uttered, coming like an awful climax to the silent thoughts on which he was

brooding, and the emphasis of her thrilling glance—all rooted him to the spot. He was hurled back, as it were, in the abyss of the past,—the present was annihilated—the future forgotten for one moment, so strong was the illusion created by the voice, addressing him by the almost forgotten name of Herbert. He seemed to wander in the green shades of her forest home, breathing words of impassioned love to a charmed and believing ear. For one moment, the purest, most unworldly period of his life was restored to him; for he had loved the wild country girl, whose heart he had awakened to such luxuriant growth by the tropic rays of passion. The impression faded, like a dissolving scene, for there was little in the person of Aunt Debby to recall the form and features of her who had once arrested his roving fancy. Still, she was as different from the harsh and defying woman whom he had occasionally met in his daily rides, as the blooming maiden, in whose eye love was once enthroned. Never, perhaps, in his whole life had he felt more fully her unexpiated and inexpiable wrongs. Aunt Debby, who had once learned and never had forgotten the study of that splendid countenance, perceived the traces of emotions she had not dreamed of exciting. And if he, the proud, cold, worldly devotee of ambition, was moved to a transient exhibition of feeling, surely she, a woman, whose heart, unnaturally hardened, had lately been fusing in the warmth of household affections—she, who, in the midst of all her injuries, and in the time of vindictive remembrance, could say, “There are moments when I love him still!”—*she* felt that inner current which flows far below the surface stirred to its very depths. It was astonishing what youthfulness was brought back to her face as the light and the glow of other days kindled and flitted like flame across her features.

It must not be supposed, because many words have been used to express the simultaneous emotions that agitated the bosoms of each that they stood long in silence, gazing into

each other's faces. Thought and feeling are like the lightning's flash, darting instantaneously over the clouds of the soul, and often leaving as little trace after its burning passage.

"This is an unexpected greeting," said he, in that rich, deep-toned voice, on which a listening Senate had often hung entranced. "You would speak with me, madam; I wait your commands."

How strange it sounded to hear *him*, *Herbert Lindsey*, call her *Madam*. It recalled her at once to a sense of their present position. The abyss again opened, which for a moment had closed, and she felt how wide a chasm separated the present from the past. Right by the spot where they stood, in the shadow of the wall that ran along the way-side, there was a fallen tree—with its gnarled and gigantic roots coiling in the air, and its withered branches pressing on the earth. Aunt Debby was weary from her long walk, and that gray old ruin seemed a fitting resting-place for the interview she desired. Seating herself there, and motioning with her hand for him to take a seat by her side, she said—

"It is not to reproach you for the past, or to call up from the grave of years, memories long buried, and, perhaps, forgotten by you, that I thus force my presence on you. Had any one told me three years ago, that I could ever have done this, I would have scoffed at them as lying prophets."

"I certainly did not expect this honour," said he, "after so many years of estrangement and hostility on your part. You have always treated me as a deadly enemy, and as such I have learned to look upon myself."

"Estrangement on my part?" repeated she, the fire coming back to her eye and the sting to her heart. "Estrangement on my part! Herbert Lindsey, I did not intend to speak of what is now irremediable, only as it might save others from misery; but I must give vent to the words that are now suffocating me. Can you look towards me and say that estrange

ment began with me? Did I not wait you at the altar, till I wished my bridal raiments were my shroud, and the dark-robed clergyman sitting gravely and solemnly before me, a priest performing my funeral rites? Did you not make me a scorn, and a mockery, and a by-word among men? Did you not—but it is no matter now—it will be no matter when we are both lying in the cold arms of death—when we are both facing the great white throne above. But, let me tell you this, this one feeling that has never forsaken me; had you told me, frankly and sincerely, that you no longer loved me, that you loved another, that your youthful fancy for me had faded away, and that another image was placed upon the ruins of mine, I would have released you, forgiven you, prayed for you, and loved you still. Heaven knows I would. Heaven knows I always marvelled what you ever saw in one like me to love.”

“I did write to you—I did ask you to release me; telling you of the opposition of my father and my friends. You answered not my letter, and I supposed you scorned my appeal. I do not justify myself for my broken vows; but I was not so remorseless a villain as to suffer you, knowingly, to go to the altar, waiting for one who was then the bridegroom of another. No, I have many crimes to answer for, but I was not capable of an act of such wanton cruelty to one, whose only fault was loving me too well. I had written, and I looked upon your silence as a proof of your scorn, I tried to think, of your indifference.”

“I never received that letter!—*never!*” said Aunt Debby, with a deep sigh. “I wish I had—it would have saved me years of bitterness at least. My heart might have been blighted, but not embittered, hardened as it was. I never blamed you for loving her you wedded better than you did me. She was worthy of the preference. But it was the public insult, the irremediable disgrace, that goaded me to madness.”

“You have indeed had reason to execrate me,” said the Senator, leaning his brow upon his hand and suffering his raven hair to fall in shadows over it—“and so has *she*, too. *You* have been the happier of the two, and have reason to rejoice in the destiny that separated you from me. I was not formed for domestic happiness. The flowers of the valley never bloomed for me. I was created to climb the dizzy heights of ambition, and, like the bird of the sun, to dip my wings in its beams!” He raised his head as he spoke, and throwing back his hair, his proud spirit flashed from his eagle eyes.

“Have you found happiness in your lofty career?” asked Aunt Debby. “Have the beams warmed, while they illuminated you?”

“Happiness!” repeated he, with a disdainful smile. “Who ever found happiness in this world? It is the dream of youth!—the meteor of manhood! But in the stormy strife with other minds, the stern struggle for distinction, I have escaped that dull stagnation, that mouldering away of the being, worse a thousand times than the vulture’s fangs or the thunder’s bolt!”

Aunt Debby, finding a singular fascination in the interview, had almost forgotten the object for which she sought it; but the turn the conversation had taken pressed it upon her recollection.

“If happiness is only the dream of youth,” she cried, “woe be to those who destroy the bright illusion! You have a son, Herbert Lindsey; do you not desire *his* happiness? Even if you have found it a shadow yourself; even if you believe it a mockery; do you not, in your secret heart, desire that *he* may be happy?”

“I do,” said he, his countenance resuming that haughty expression now habitual to it.

“Your son loves my niece—has loved her from childhood!”

“Enough—enough!” he exclaimed, folding his arms over his

breast, as if he thus closed up every avenue to his heart. "I do not allow the least dictation in my domestic affairs. As I have chosen for myself, so have I chosen for my son—a shining mark—a lofty goal!"

"I do not dictate," she cried, earnestly, "I entreat for two youthful beings, whose happiness hangs trembling on your will. If your conscience ever tells you that you have injured me, as you but now expressed, let this be the only expiation I shall ever ask."

"Ask anything for yourself and it shall be granted. My son belongs to me."

"For myself!—this is mockery! What is there left for me to ask? Can you give me back my blighted youth, undoubting faith, and unshaken trust? Can you turn back the river of time and restore the hopes buried in its waters? No! I ask nothing for myself—nor would I accept a kingdom from your hands. But I do demand, as an atonement for the past, your sanction to a union on which the happiness of one far dearer to me than my own self depends."

"Your language is imperative, madam," said he, rising with a darkened countenance. "I am not accustomed to demands. It is probable that within a short time I shall leave this country for a foreign court, where I must maintain in my own person the honour and dignity of the land of my birth. My son will accompany me; and in the great scenes unfolding to his view, he will lose sight of the follies of his boyhood. Any request, any command even, independent of family aggrandizement, shall be courteously listened to."

"You have no heart!" she cried, rising, too, and crushing under her feet, the dry, yellow leaves, rustling beneath her; "I have wasted words on a man of iron. I believed for one moment, that you were accessible to human feeling, but I was mistaken. I have humbled myself in vain before an inexorable will. But my purpose was holy, and God be the judge

between us, which has most cause for shame, you or I ! Look around you : everything breathes of decay, the withered leaves, this fallen tree, the mournful autumn gale. We too are passing away. Time is short, Eternity is long. Farewell, Herbert Lindsey ; something tells me, that it is the last time we shall ever meet on this side of the grave !”

Her voice gradually sunk into a low tone of deep solemnity, and as she turned slowly away, the proud anger of the Senator subsided, under the melancholy influence of her prophetic words. He walked along in silence by her side, through the narrow, darkly shaded path, that led towards her home. When they came to the open road, where the habitations of men began to appear, she stopped and said—

“ We part here. Think of all I have said, and perhaps I may not, after all, have spoken in vain. In the silence of night, the secrecy of darkness, it will come back to you, and mingling with the whispers of conscience, still have power. Once again, farewell ! May God forgive you all your offences against Him, as freely as I forgive those committed against me !”

She extended her hand, and swept, with one rapid glance, that kingly figure she might never again behold. How strangely she felt, as his hand closed over hers ! that hand which had never before met her touch without awakening a thrill of ecstasy ; now, it seemed to her the token of an everlasting farewell, and cold shivers ran through her frame.

“ Farewell, Deborah Fay !” said he ; “ I deserve your curse, and not your forgiveness ; but I thank you for it. You are right ; I *shall* remember your words. This strange meeting will haunt me like a ghost. It is like the awakening of the dead.”

His grasp tightened momentarily, round her cold fingers, relaxed again, and they parted, never to meet again, as she had said, on this side of the grave. She walked slowly homeward, without looking back, though her thoughts were all rolling

behind. So overpowering had been her emotions, that her limbs suddenly lost their strength, and she was obliged to lean against the fence for support. It is a false idea that the feelings and passions are strongest in early life. As the beams of the noonday sun are stronger and warmer than his dawning rays, so does the heart at life's zenith hour, throb with stronger, warmer pulsations, than in the morning twilight, or glowing antemeridian of being. As she clung to the gray railing that formed part of the boundary of Sunny Dell, and thought of the past so vividly, forcibly recalled, she asked herself, if she had power to live over again her vanished hours, whether she would wish the name of Herbert Lindsey blotted from the record, and strange as it may seem, she answered "*No.*" She would not go down into the grave, as too many do, without knowing the unbounded capacities of her own heart, that foretaste of an immortal existence. Much as she had suffered, and might still suffer, she had been awakened to the full joy of loving, and that memory was worth an age of indifference. And when, carried out of herself, she remembered Rena, and the grounds on which *her* hopes rested, she felt a conviction that notwithstanding the cold repelling words which had met her warm appeal, it was not lost in air. She was glad that she had been strengthened to perform what she believed a duty, and she went on her way with a firmer tread.

In the mean time, Herbert Lindsey approached Bellevue, with very different feelings from those with which he had left it. A shaft had found its way to his heart, winged by the hand of truth, and it fastened and rankled there. It seemed as if he were destined to rouse all the scorpions of memory, in that autumnal walk. Just before turning into the path that led directly to his own home, he met the young charity girl, whom he had not beheld since he had banished her from his own roof. He remembered the promise he had made his son, that she should never want while he lived, a promise he had not yet fulfilled.

As he no longer feared an attachment for her on the part of his son, he felt with more remorse the claims of this poor, disregarded girl. She started when she saw him, and a cloud of fear and aversion passed over her face. There was an air of neglect about her person, a weariness and gloom in her countenance, that, while it marred the splendour of her beauty, excited more interest in him, than a brighter, more joyous exterior would have done.

“Girl, where do you live now?” said he, stopping and addressing her, to her unspeakable astonishment. She pointed to the house of Mrs. Brown, just seen through the many-coloured leaves—for she was too much disconcerted to speak. That lady, who had discovered that she had such a superior talent for managing young girls, had assumed the almost exclusive guardianship of Stella, who, defeated in all her wild, ambitious schemes, dragged on, in sullen endurance, her eleemosynary existence.

“I promised Mrs. Lindsey,” continued he, “when I refused you a home, to see that you never suffered want. Take this pocket-book, and when you have exhausted the supply it contains, it shall be replenished.”

Stella felt the pocket-book in her hands, or she would have doubted the evidence of her hearing. Such sudden and unlooked-for liberality overpowered her.

“You are very kind, sir,” she said, stammering, feeling more *shame* at receiving money from the proud man she so hated, than in stealing it from one who was sheltering her under their roof.

“Have you a comfortable home?” he asked, with still more remarkable condescension.

“No, sir,” said she, bitterly; “I am nothing but a slave from morning till night. If I ever complain of my lot, my mistress points to yonder almshouse, my early home, and threatens to send me back.”

"Why do you remain with her?" he inquired, following the direction of her eye to the low-roofed building, that stood on a lone common, as if set apart from social communion. There were dark memories hanging there, and he turned away with an involuntary shudder.

"I cannot go where I would," she answered, in a tone of hopeless despondency. "Everybody is getting tired of me; everybody despises me because I am poor."

"Do you remember your mother?" he asked, with an irresistible impulse.

"She died when I was an infant."

"Have you any memorial of her?" he continued, carried away by the strong impulse which was mastering him, and forgetting the strange impression his questions might make.

"Nothing but this locket," replied she, looking at him with intense curiosity; but his eyes were fixed upon the medallion she lifted from her neck, and he observed it not. She pressed her fingers on the edge, and it flew open, revealing a glass case, in which two locks of hair were linked together, one of paly gold, the other of raven blackness.

"Did you know my mother, sir?" she exclaimed, fixing her eyes, with a sudden gleam, on the Senator's sable locks.

"Yes, I saw her once, when a girl like you," he answered, recalled to a sense of his imprudence, and turning proudly from her.

"And my father!" she cried, springing after him and seizing with daring hand the sleeve of his coat; "tell me if you know him—tell me where I may find him, and claim his protection."

"How should I know your father, presuming girl?" cried he, his lips turning of ashy paleness. "I felt an interest in your fate, and condescended to question you. Release me," added he, with such an air of imperial haughtiness, she dared not resist; "and remember the next time, to whom you speak."

“I do remember;” folding her hands with an air of mock humility over her breast. She was tempted to hurl the pocket-book after him, so galling was it to receive a gift, accompanied by such haughty words; but the money might serve to release her from her present bondage. The wild suspicion excited by the jetty locks still lurked in her mind. She recollected his dark, troubled countenance, when he first met her at the gate, his denunciations when he found her a guest at his house, his passionate interdictions of all intercourse between her and his son. Pride alone could not excite such stormy passions, such maddening fears. Hugging her thoughts in secrecy, she determined to visit the almshouse, and inquire more particularly of her parentage, and her mother’s history. Till now, she had felt no interest in searching for more than had been revealed. She knew that her mother had died in unwedded misery, and that no father claimed her as his child. The locket she wore upon her neck was her only inheritance—even her name was the gift of fancy, for it seemed her mother did not wish her to wear hers, associated as it was with degradation and sorrow.

Mr. Lindsey entered his house and walked at once into the library. He was warm from exercise and tumultuous emotions, and leaving the door unclosed, he threw himself into a chair.

“Fool!” thought he, “I came very near exposing myself by my insane questions. My meeting with that woman has unnerved me.”

As he sat thus, with his door open, he heard voices in the antechamber, in earnest conversation. One was that of Mrs. Lindsey, the other of a stranger. He paid no attention to the sounds, which murmured with a kind of waterfall monotony, till he heard the name of Stella Lightner, pronounced with emphasis by the strange lady, and he was roused to listen. She was from the metropolis, and was relating the story

of Stella's theft and detection, as she had heard it from the gossiping milliner, whose shop was the resort of the fashionable loungers of the day. Hearing that the young girl, who was the heroine of the disgraceful story, resided in the neighbourhood, she felt a natural curiosity to learn something more of her history, for Mrs. Modely had represented her as having the beauty of an angel. Mrs. Lindsey seemed exceedingly distressed, for she had felt an uncommon interest in her beautiful protégée. She mourned over the depravity which she said must have had its origin in early neglect. The poor mother had expiated her sins by her life, and was dead before her child was capable of receiving moral lessons, but the *unnatural father*—on *him* must rest the burthen of her guilt. Every word she uttered fell like drops of molten lead on her husband's sore and wounded conscience. On *him* rested the burthen of that guilt. Against his name, must the accusing spirit, that bore up the accents of his pure and gentle wife, record the denunciation. He could not bear to remain a listener to a conversation so blasting. He could close the doors and exclude the sound from his own ears; but he wanted to stop it; he did not want such things said, as if silence could avert the curse, that must fall from no human lips. He rose and walked in the piazza, till the stranger guest departed, when he went into the apartment where his wife was seated, whose pale, sweet face was illumined with a smile of welcome, as his well-known step drew near.

CHAPTER XVII.

“Oh! ye, whose hour-glass shifts its tranquil sands
In the unvexed silence of the student’s cell;
Ye whose untempted hearts have never tossed
Upon the dark and stormy sea where life
Gives battle to the elements—and man
Wrestles with man, for some slight plank
Whose weight will bear but one—to me alike
Or day or night—*ambition* has no rest.”

BULWER.

“HAVE my letters been brought from the office?” asked the Senator. Mrs. Lindsey answered by putting in his hand a large packet, bearing the Washington post-mark. It was with no common interest he broke the wax that sealed these important papers. He had been anxiously expecting them. They probably announced his appointment as Minister Plenipotentiary to the foreign court to which his eyes had been long turned—an office congenial to his own ambition, and doubly desirable, as his most powerful political rival and bitterest enemy was also a candidate. Conscious of his commanding talents, irresistible eloquence, and remarkable personal influence, he never dreamed of defeat. He rejoiced that his enemy was a rival candidate, for the downfall of his aspiring hopes would only glorify his own success. He had spoken openly to his family of his going abroad, and of his plans for the future, for he had signified to the President his willingness to accept the situation, thinking he conferred a far greater honour in receiving, than the Chief Magistrate did in bestowing it. With a kindling eye he broke the seal, and his glance ran rapidly over the contents. A cloud black as night lowered

upon his brow. He dropped the letter and ground it fiercely with his iron heel.

“And this is my reward!”—he exclaimed, forgetting the presence of his wife in his overwhelming rage and mortification—“for this have I toiled and intrigued, and bartered my soul’s peace—to be set aside for the blackest villain that ever dared to usurp Congressional honours! Had it been anybody else I might have borne it. But for *him* to triumph over *me*! By Heaven! I’ll not endure it!”

Stooping down, he took up the trampled paper and tore it in a thousand pieces.

“My husband—my dear husband,”—said his trembling wife—“be not thus moved. You are already burdened with public honours. I should think you would be weary of them. Oh! if this disappointment led you to withdraw from the world to the quiet of domestic life; to the bosom of your family; the circle of your friends; how happy, how blest we might be!”

She spoke with unwonted energy, for the hope that, baffled in ambition, he might yet turn to domestic love for consolation, revived her poor, wilted heart. Her meek eyes were bent sympathizingly, beseechingly upon him.

“This is the way all women talk!” cried he, in a contemptuous, bitter tone. “What do they know about it? Have I not been toiling year after year, step by step, up a rugged ascent? And now, when I find myself on the summit, ready to look down on my enemies in a blaze of triumph, I am hurled from it ungratefully, shamefully, and my worst enemy elevated on my ruin! Friends! talk to me of friends! I have none! I never had one! I have sacrificed friendship, love, joy, everything to ambition—and this is my reward!”

Throwing himself on the sofa, he leaned his head on the arm and covered his face with his hands. Mrs. Lindsey turned towards him. It was the first time she had ever seen that

stately head bowed as if in sorrow, and her timidity vanished at the sight. She went and knelt at his side, that she might not look down upon him in this prostration of his spirit. She even ventured to put her yearning arms around him and whisper words of tenderness and sympathy.

“Herbert, my husband! say not that you have no friends. Am not I your friend? Does not our noble boy love you with devoted affection? Oh! by the love that no neglect or coldness could destroy, let me entreat you to discard an ungrateful public, and live henceforth for the wife and son whose happiness is bound up in yours!”

The Senator lifted his head, and his bloodshot eyes met the tearful glance of his wife. He looked at her steadfastly for a moment, and his face was “a tablet of unutterable thoughts.”

“Yes, Emily,” said he, in an altered voice; “you have been a devoted wife—you have deserved a better fate, and I pray that some calmer, happier hours are yet in store for you. You are right—I *will* discard an ungrateful world. I have sought the laurel wreath, and won the crown of thorns. Rise, and sit down by my side—your presence is soothing to me.”

She rose, with a feeling of happiness long a stranger to her heart, and seating herself by him, surrendered herself to hopes she thought for ever blighted. He still retained her hand, but, closing his eyes and leaning back on the sofa, he seemed to indicate a wish for silence. The twilight was gradually deepening, and at length darkness gathered round them. She sat motionless, fearful of moving, lest she should disturb meditations so profound—lest he should withdraw his hand, and rouse her from her dream of felicity.

“You had better ring for lights,” said he, suddenly rising. “I will take one to the library. Do not call me to supper, for I do not wish any. I have a great many letters to write to-night, and do not like to be disturbed. Retire without

waiting for me. I shall probably be up till long past midnight."

Taking a candle from the servant, who brought them to the door, he reached the threshold; then turning back, to where his wife stood, with her pale, anxious, subdued countenance—

"Emily," said he, "I thank you for your sympathy—your devoted affection. I have not deserved it. Forgive my harshness and coldness. I *am* going to begin a new life. The past will be all a dream. Good night!"

Then, bending down, he kissed her forehead, and left her, happier than she had felt since the early days of her marriage. It was no unusual thing for her husband to go without his supper, and to sit up beyond the midnight hour. She did not feel any solicitude on that account, but she hoped this was one of the last sacrifices he would have to make for the *world*, and that his evenings would henceforth be devoted to domestic tranquillity. The words—"I *am* going to begin a new life," were so soothing, so full of promise, she sat down that night to her lonely supper, rejoicing in the dawning rays of the millennium of her wedded life.

The Senator entered his library, locked the door, lighted the astral lamp on the centre of the table, and seating himself, he leaned his elbows on the table and his head upon his hands. He sat thus for more than an hour, in abstraction so deep, that he lost all consciousness of his actual position, and when he looked up and pushed back the heavy locks from his brow, he started back from the ghostly company that surrounded him. The marble busts standing out so cold, and white, and ghastly in the pale lamp-light, resembled the faces of the dead, and never had the shadows, resting in the folds of the dark, green curtains seemed so thick and gloomy. With a cold, faint smile at his involuntary recoil, he gazed round the whole apartment, taking in all the massy volumes, over which he had pored so many long hours, then heaving a deep sigh, he

drew towards him pen, ink, and paper, and began to write. Sometimes he would write rapidly, as if his pen was burning under his fingers, then he would throw it down and sink into a long fit of abstraction. Letter after letter was thus written, sealed, and directed; but how strange were the superscriptions of some of them! one to his son, and another to Deborah Fay—he must have forgotten her married name. There were many others devoted to business; and the clock struck the midnight hour before he had concluded. Thick drops of perspiration stood upon his forehead when he rose from his chair, after arranging the letters in a conspicuous manner around the lamp.

“’Tis done,” he cried, “I shall soon be ready!” Ready for what? methinks some anxious voice inquires. Alas! that the most magnificent gifts of nature should be thus madly abused, thus ungratefully thrown back to the giver! Herbert Lindsey had told his wife that he intended to “begin a new life;” but with a far different meaning from what entered her misguided heart. He had wrought himself up to the desperate determination of quitting a world which the tyranny of his own passions had converted into a prison-house of anguish, as if he could annihilate those passions with his rash, heaven-daring hand. He believed in the God of creation, but not of redemption. He rejected the lamp which revelation offered to illumine the darkness of the future, proudly walking in the light of unassisted reason. He had lived for the god of this world; and now when he was spurned from the altar of the deity he worshipped, he resolved to *die* the proud master of his own destiny; to enter futurity like a victor, with bold step and resolute hand, rather than a vassal, awaiting with trembling spirit the summons of his Lord. Yes! he would fall, like the monarch of the forest, struck by the lightning’s bolt, in the fulness of its leafy honours, rather than moulder away by the slow decay of age or disease. There were moments,

when invisible hands seemed to hold him back from the tremendous brink on which he stood ; when his son rose before him in the beauty of his young manhood, and fixing on him his clear, dark, rebuking eyes, entreated him to stay his suicidal hand ; when his wife seemed clinging round him, imploring him not to pierce *her* heart through the lifeblood of *his*. There were moments, too, when the billows of the dark ocean, in which he was about to plunge, seemed waving beneath his feet, so black, so deep, so awful, so boundless, even his undaunted spirit recoiled with horror and dismay. But if there was an unfathomable gulf before him, there were spectres behind, mocking and goading him onward, which he would not turn back and face.

“ Yes ! ” repeated he, “ I shall soon be ready. ” Then rising and walking to the window, and sweeping aside the heavy curtains, he stood and gazed upon the beautiful world he was never more to behold. The harvest moon, shining in her zenith glory, with the rich, golden lustre of autumn, was rolling slowly, grandly above, while the stars and “ the planets were lost in her blaze. ” He lifted the sash that he might inhale once more the breath of heaven, and the night-breeze came in and rustled softly through his hair. There he stood, covered with the moonlight as with a mantle, the wind, like the breath of the Deity, whispering to his spirit ; looking up into the illimitable arch of Heaven, meditating the most awful crime that man, with unclouded reason, can ever perpetrate.

“ Farewell, beautiful, but vain, unsatisfying earth ! ” he cried ; “ I have tasted all thy pleasures, and they have left ashes and gall behind them ; I have enjoyed thy honours, and they have turned into tortures and stings. Farewell, brief dream of life, farewell ! The hour of my awakening is at hand ; I go to solve the great mystery of my being, that sublime enigma human wisdom never yet has fathomed. When to-morrow’s sun shall rise, I shall know the secret of

its beams ; I shall be an archangel in knowledge, or be lost in the blackness of annihilation."

He turned and quenched the flaming lamp that illumined the centre of the apartment, and a flood of heavenly light swept through the room.

In the mean time Mrs. Lindsey occupied her solitary chamber above, listening for the footsteps of him who was never to approach her more. She had been so excited by the conversation before supper, and the thoughts it had awakened—so full of hope, so bright with promise, that she could not sleep. The moon, too, shone with such surpassing radiance, she could not close her eyes to shut out the beams. She heard the clock strike twelve, and she was sure her vigils would soon be at an end ; and yet, every stroke sounded like a knell, and she imagined there was a deep, unusual pause between each counted hour. Another hour might have glided away, when the sudden, sharp report of a pistol, and the heavy sound of a falling body in the room below, went right through her head and heart, shivering every nerve and fibre of her being. That room was the library—that noise—She sprang from the bed with a shriek so terrible it rang through the silent house, wakening a thousand echoes. She rushed through the passage, down stairs, darting through moonbeam and shadow, till she reached the door of the library. It was locked !

"Oh, my God !" she shrieked, "have mercy upon me !" and fell fainting against the door.

The report of the pistol and the piercing cries of Mrs. Lindsey, roused the servants, who slept in the house. They came with lights, all trembling with terror, to the spot where she lay. The woman raised her insensible mistress and removed her from the threshold ; but she dared go no farther. She feared to leave her fellow-servant, who was fortunately a man, and, though filled with dread, he had courage enough to

force open the door, which being locked inside, resisted their efforts. The sight which met his eyes was indeed appalling! Prostrate on the floor, with the moon shining full upon his face, weltering in his blood, lay the majestic form of the Senator. His features were calm and still as marble; the blood oozed from his heart, where the instantaneous death-wound had been made.

It is not necessary to describe minutely, the particulars of this awful night. Neighbours gathered in, the physician was summoned, who called back the vanished senses of Mrs. Lindsey, but he had no Promethean touch that could kindle the extinguished flame of life in the cold bosom of the statesman. That flame was quenched in blood.

Bellevue was surrounded by a kind of inapproachable atmosphere, in consequence of the indomitable pride of its master; so that few dared to attempt the task of administering consolation to the wretched widow. Hannah, the active, considerate and judicious Hannah, assumed a responsibility which could not be given at such a moment. She urged the immediate departure of her husband for Sherwood, despatched the letter to Aunt Debby, whose maiden name she knew; and watched by Mrs. Lindsey, with a tenderness, one would hardly have thought consistent with her strong and energetic nature.

Mrs. Lindsey, who, during the remainder of the night, had fallen from one fainting fit to another, at last sunk into a deep slumber. But while the ascending day was excluded from her darkened chamber, and stilly steps glided through the passage, there was one who sat by her, a fellow-mourner, who had come to minister to her like a sister, unknown to *her*, but not to *him*, who lay in shrouded majesty in the adjoining apartment. When Mrs. Lindsey lifted her heavy lids, she saw in the dim twilight that surrounded her, a stranger, with pale face, and large black and melancholy eyes, bending over her.

"I am a friend," said Aunt Debby for it was she, who,

like a sister of charity, had come to the bed-side of the mourner; "let me stay with you. I have suffered, and can feel for you."

"Suffered!" repeated Mrs. Lindsey, clasping her pale hands, and raising them feebly above her head; "Merciful Father! who ever suffered like me?"

"We are all born to suffer," said Aunt Debby, in a low, sad voice, "we pass through a furnace of fire on our way to the kingdom of Heaven. Remember, my sister, it is the hand of God that is laid upon you. Resist, and it will crush you like iron. Submit, and it will be like down upon your heart."

"But such a blow!" cried the mourner, "Oh, my God, such a blow! Anything, everything but this I could have borne. But for this, there is no balm on earth, or in Heaven. No hope, no mercy—none."

"The angel of Providence is disguised," said the comforter, "but it is an angel still. We are weak and blind and erring. There is nothing left us but submission. We may struggle with our destiny, but we must be brought to submission at last. God is omnipotent."

All the while she was speaking, Aunt Debby bathed the brow of the sufferer with balmy waters, and moistened her dry and feverish hands. Soothed by these gentle cares, she again sunk into slumber, for she was under the influence of a powerful anodyne.

"And now," thought Aunt Debby, "I may leave her for a few moments, and look for the last time on *that face*, before Death has stamped upon it the signet of decay."

She stole noiselessly from the room, and entered that which contained the lifeless body of the suicide. Without speaking, she motioned the watchers to leave her alone. With a cold hand, she turned back the white drapery, and gazed long and steadfastly on that marble brow, once the throne of pride, now placid and calm, as if no warring passion had ever disturbed

its deep repose. Never in life had the matchless beauty of his classic features been so fully revealed, as in the immobility of death. He might have been mistaken for one of those perfect monuments of Grecian art, carved by the hand of the statuary, were it not for the black and shining hair that shaded his temples and brows, and the dark lashes that swept mournfully down his colourless cheeks. And that glorious form was nothing but clay ; it must be consigned to the grave, the grave his own impious hands had dug. Aunt Debby groaned as this agonizing thought absorbed every other, and taking his letter from her bosom, she again read it, as the last legacy of the dead.

“You prophesied truly,” said the letter, “that we should never meet again on this side the grave. When these lines meet your eye, cold in death will be the heart whose falsehood has darkened your existence ! In this solemn hour, when I am winding up all earthly accounts, I cannot deceive you—and believe the words of a dying man when I say, that the short era of my life gladdened by your love was the purest, the happiest, and best. The serpent ambition had not then coiled itself in the Eden of my heart ! I thought you had become my deadly enemy, and hardened myself in the conviction that your nature was cold and impassible to suffering. You have undeceived me. I feel all the injuries I have inflicted. I feel the curse of your unmerited forgiveness ! Receive the only expiation you ask,—my consent to the union for which you supplicated. Since I parted from you, I have learned a bitter lesson of the ingratitude of that world I have so blindly worshipped ! Let my son, if he will, seek happiness in the vale—I have found the mountain top bleak and bare !

“I have one confession to make—not to my wife—lest I plant another thorn in her already bleeding bosom,—not to my son, for I would not that he should abhor my memory—

but to *you*, who know me as I am—a perjured, guilty, and betraying man! There is one crime, hidden in darkness, which the world knows not—which the victim bound herself by an oath never to reveal! An oath she preserved inviolate in sorrow and in death. I would not have left her in want and destitution, but I never learned the place of her retreat, till she appeared before me, like an avenging spirit, in the person of her daughter—the young charity girl, who has often shared your bounty and proved herself so unworthy of your care. To prevent the possibility of an attachment for her on the part of my son, I treated her with cruelty and harshness, drove her from my house, where my wife had received her, and exposed her to the temptations of poverty and neglect. On my head rests the damning sin of her youth! To my son I have confided the trust of setting apart a portion of my property for her yearly support, as an indemnification for her cruel exile from my home. To you I confide the secret of her birth. In this moment, when the sins of my life seem to rise up incarnate and stare me in the face, those against *her* wear a black and demon aspect! Save her, if possible, from a second transgression. Find her, if possible, another and kinder home. One more charge, thou much wronged and much enduring woman, and I have done. You will comfort and sustain my feeble, sinking wife. Let her lean in the hour of her bereavement on your stronger mind and firmer heart. You will cherish her for my sake. I have chilled her by coldness, bruised her by harshness—and yet she loves me still. Oh! woman, woman! great and marvellous is thy love! Ill-requited, wronged and suffering woman! surely there must be a heaven for thee, if not for transgressing man!

“And now, Deborah—true and noble-hearted love of my youth—farewell! You will not forget me—you will not curse me! If I curse myself by my life’s last fatal act, I, who have died the penalty, will still defy the doom!”

Aunt Debby perused that letter, a second time, by Herbert Lindsey's cold, unbreathing form, then kneeling down, the fountain of the deep of her heart was broken up. Burying her face in the folds of spotless linen that mantled him, she wept tears, which, had they been drops of blood, could hardly have wrung her heart with greater agony.

"Great and long-suffering is the Lord," she murmured, "we dare not limit His mercy. But in justice—as in mercy—His holy will be done!"

For one moment, she laid her hand on his icy forehead, then slowly drawing over it the folds of the winding-sheet, with lingering footsteps crossed the threshold, and resumed her station by the widow's couch.

The letter, addressed to Sherwood, though yet unsealed by him, may perhaps excite more interest in the reader, read in connexion with the one just unfolded. It was as follows:—

"My son—A few hours ago, I was building great palaces for you and for me, believing they were founded upon a rock; but their base was sand, and the winds and waves have swept away the stately dome of my pride. I bow with the falling pillars, and make myself a grave among the ruins. I have chosen my destiny—mourn not for it. For yourself—let your own heart guide you in your choice of life. If you believe there is any happiness to be found, *seek it*, but not in the high places of the earth. Let my name be a Pharos, warning you of the shoals of ambition. I do believe, and take it as my dying record, that if *earth can give happiness*, it is in the possession of such love as you have won. Take it, keep it, bind it on your heart as a gem more precious than all the false honours and lying vanities of the world. I tell thee, Sherwood—the heart of woman is a sacred thing. Trample on everything else if you will, but spare the heart of woman. But why do I speak thus? I know you will. I remember when you opposed your filial bosom as a shield for the mo-

ther, who was sinking beneath the whirlwind of my stormy passions. Sherwood, be still her shield. To your filial tenderness I commit her. *You* will be faithful to the trust which *I* have abused.

“The poor girl, whom you so nobly defended from my persecution, will receive an annual portion of my property for her support, just what your own liberality may prompt. This act of justice will, I know, never be forgotten by you.

“Sherwood, my son—my only son—my noble, noble boy! the strongest, deepest feeling of my heart is paternal love! Your image rises before me—I see it in the yellow moonlight. You come and twine yourself round me closer and closer still—my arm grows weak in your grasp. My spirit faints! Oh! let me go, my son—I must—I will be free!

“It is enough! I have conquered the last weakness of nature! Again I feel my strength! Proudly have I lived, victoriously will I die! I dare not bless you! It would be mockery—but remember, the last word I penned, the last sigh I breathed, was for you!”

CHAPTER XVIII.

“And now, before the holy man,
They stood in all their youthful pride,
And spoke those words, and vowed those vows
Which bind the husband to his bride.” DOANE.

Ashes to ashes—dust to dust. It was even so. Herbert Lindsey was laid in the same burying-ground where, seventeen years before, a poor dweller of the almshouse found the six-foot bed of earth which the poorest children of Adam claim as their last inheritance.

It was all over! Silence and thick gloom overshadowed the household. Sherwood sat alone in his father's library, that place of dread and awful memories; yet still he sought it, because it was the scene of that thrilling tragedy, the spot where the letter was penned—that last sad legacy of an erring parent's love. He sat in the same chair where his father had sat, and gazed on a dark-red stain ingrained in the carpet, with dry and burning eyes. The colours seemed to deepen, glow, and glare upon his sight—to waver like flame, and coruscate like fiery sparks. Covering his face, he pressed it upon the table to shut out the awful phenomenon. Could he only weep—only shed one tear! but not one had softened his arid grief from the moment he had received the terrible tidings. With dry eyes he had knelt by the bed-side of his mother; with dry eyes he had stood at the head of his father's grave, and heard the clods rattle on his coffin; with dry eyes

he leaned upon the spot where his father's last earthly aspirations had been breathed for him.

He heard no door open—no footsteps advance; but he felt a soft hand on his shoulder—a low voice in his ear, whisper sadly, tremulously, "Sherwood!" It was Rena; and, as he opened his arms and drew her to his heart, and felt her tears raining on his cheeks, his own pent-up agony found vent, and he wept—wept upon her bosom, like a child, bitter but relieving tears.

Her aunt had sent for her, believing that as their love was now sanctioned by the highest earthly authority, it was as much her office to pour balm into his wounded heart as if her vows had been breathed at the altar. She came to perform woman's holiest mission on earth; and gently, sweetly, sacredly did she fulfil her task—and they both felt that there is no love like that which is sanctified by sorrow, and associated with the memories of the dead.

And now that every obstacle is removed which impeded the union of the son of the statesman and the daughter of the farmer, we feel that the history we have written must draw to a close. We are sorry for it, for we have followed with deep interest the development of their characters. We are sorry, too, to part with Aunt Debby, who has been gradually resuming her original brightness, till she has become an angel of consolation, binding up the broken heart and pouring oil and balm into its welling wounds.

But we have not quite finished. There are some characters in whose destiny we trust the reader is not entirely uninterested. The beautiful charity girl! we hope she may yet be forgiven for the errors and crime, that sullied the morning of her youth.

Aunt Debby was faithful to the trust reposed in her by him who knew so well the steadfastness and truth on which

he relied. As soon as Mrs. Lindsey rose from the bed of languishment on which she was prostrated (for she did yield to the hand that smote, and the iron grasp of despair that would have crushed was loosened)—as soon as Aunt Debby felt that she could leave her with her son and Rena, who had wound herself closely and endearingly round her heart, and from whom she refused to be separated, she returned to Sunny Dell and sent for the long-banished Stella, whose faults were now remembered only to be forgiven.

The hapless life she had led with Mrs. Brown, the monotony of her daily tasks, the close confinement she endured, had wilted the roses of her cheeks and dimmed the lustre of her starry eyes. The excessive fairness and transparency of her skin, the redundancy of her golden locks, indicated a corresponding delicacy of constitution, and a predisposition to that disease which is the relentless scourge of the northern clime. Aunt Debby noticed with apprehension the dry cough, that Mrs. Brown had selfishly disregarded. She saw, too, that though in the morning she was of waxen paleness, in the evening a glow, brighter than the petals of the rose, coloured the alabaster of her cheek. Stella, who since the hour of her detection had looked upon herself as a disgraced and abandoned outcast, felt a sullen disregard of life, which rendered her careless of her growing weakness. She was roused from her indifference by the vague hope excited by Mr. Lindsey's interrogations; but that hope was dispelled by her visit to the almshouse, where she could learn nothing of her mother's past history. Now the unexpected kindness of Aunt Debby, whose trust she had so shamefully abused, and the legacy of Mr. Lindsey, of which Sherwood had immediately informed her, wakened the first real feelings of gratitude she had ever experienced. She was brought once more within the sphere of social blessings; and after believing herself for ever excluded

from them, by her own sin and folly (for the story of her transgression had followed her), she knew how to appreciate their value. But it was too late. Stella's days were numbered. In vain Aunt Debby called in the best medical aid, and faithfully attended to the prescribed remedies. Consumption had hung its hectic rose upon her cheek, the signet seal of death. And now Aunt Debby, instead of striving with the doom which no human hand could avert, endeavoured to prepare her for the life that is evermore. She felt that she had been brought very near the unseen world by the late startling event, and that her views were clearer and deeper than they had ever been before ; and with earnest and solemn zeal she brought home the divine truths of religion to the now enlightened conscience and repentant heart of the dying girl. Though Rena ministered like a gentle, loving sister, and Sherwood like a true-hearted brother, it was to Aunt Debby she clung with an affection and gratitude that grew deeper and stronger as life waned away. It was *her* hand that received the last faint pressure of hers—it was to her face her last fading glance was turned.

Unfortunate Stella ! beautiful, misguided child, of a beautiful, misguided mother !—may the remembrance of thy errors be lost in pity for thy early doom. More blest in death than in life, may thy example be a warning to those who are tempted to forsake the guide of their youth, and tread the dark and downward path of sin and shame !

“There is a time to weep,” saith the wise man, “and a time to laugh ; a time to mourn, and a time to dance.”

If it was not a time to laugh and dance, it was one to smile and hope, when the handsome new house of Colonel Fay was

adorned and illuminated for the marriage festival of his daughter. There was a large and gay assembly, for all loved the sweet *Snowbird* of her native valley, and gathered round her to congratulate her on her brilliant prospects.

It was Doctor Clifford, the beloved and revered, who pronounced over her the nuptial benediction, with that voice of music and look of prayer, which gave consecration to any act—how much more to the solemn rite of marriage! When Rena heard those deep, melodious accents address her as the wedded wife of Sherwood Lindsey—when she turned from the dark eyes that were beaming upon her unutterable love, to the tearful but happy glance of her father—her heart literally ached with the fullness of her gratitude and joy. Henry, too, her dear, gentle brother, he too was bending upon her his beautiful but pensive eyes. The sad fate of Stella, whom he had once so passionately loved, had cast a shadow over his youth; but there was a sweet girl near him, in the meridian of her teens, whose smiles played upon the shadow, and Rena hoped that ere long it would melt away in their brightness.

There was one friend whose face was missing in that bridal group. It was Aunt Debby. She longed to be present at the nuptials of the child of her adoption, but there was a lonely mourner at Bellevue, who needed the consolation of her presence.

“*They* are happy”—thought she—“they will not miss Aunt Debby from that gay, bridal throng! Life is all before them, beautiful with hope and love,—blooming with flowers and spanned by rainbows. There are the sunbeams—here the clouds! He told me ‘to cherish *her* for his sake,’ and I have tried to be faithful to the solemn charge—I will be faithful to the end. No, no—Sherwood and Rena are happy in themselves—and long, long may they be so! The blessing of Almighty God rest upon them! Ah! little did I

think that *I* should ever invoke a blessing on the son of Herbert Lindsey!"

Aunt Debby bowed her head in the humility of a contrite spirit, and a tear glittered on her lap. Well might Herbert Lindsey say—"Oh! woman, great and marvellous is thy love!"

THE END.

3474







UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY
Los Angeles

This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.

PS Hentz-

1919 Rena.

H4r

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



AA 000 035 017 3

PS
1919
H4r

U